MAXIMIZING RESOURCES
FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Institutional Strategies for Increasing Affordability and Success for Low-Income Students in the Regional Public Four-Year Sector: Tuition and Financial Aid

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1 This paper does not represent the views of the Urban Institute or George Washington University. The paper was written prior to Gigi Jones' employment with the U.S. Department of Education, and it does not necessarily reflect the views of the United States, the Institute of Education Sciences or the U.S. Department of Education, where she is currently employed. 5 CFR 2635.807(b).

Comprehensive regional four-year public universities enroll many low-income students who face disproportionate barriers to succeeding in college. The most direct way to diminish financial barriers to college enrollment and success is to reduce required expenses or to increase the funds available to students to pay those expenses. This paper addresses potential strategies available to leaders of universities in this sector to increase college affordability for low-income students through tuition and financial aid policies.

No single strategy rises to the top as an approach both feasible within the financial and regulatory constraints facing public universities and supported by strong evidence about effectiveness in improving student outcomes. However, several approaches that institutions have taken appear to be promising and provide examples that institutional leaders should consider in developing their agendas for the coming years. The five tuition policies and six financial aid approaches we discuss all have the potential to ease the financial difficulties facing low-income students at comprehensive public universities.

The particular circumstances of institutions, including the demographics of the student body, financial constraints, geography, and current completion rates, will affect the appeal and viability of the ideas presented. For example, a university that charges by the credit hour and serves many full-time students enrolling for 12 or 13 credits per semester should seriously consider a block tuition plan; a university with a large population of students who are parents could make a real difference by addressing child care issues. On the other hand, an institution with a relatively high four-year completion rate would be ill advised to implement a policy of partial refunds for on-time graduation; and an institution where most students are of traditional college age may not need to devote resources to connecting students to public income support benefits.

Nonetheless, there are broad guidelines that apply to all institutions.

- Tuition policies can affect enrollment patterns, leading to a significant impact on the overall price of a college education, beyond the published prices. Students save on tuition and have more time to earn money if they graduate more quickly—and they usually cost the institution less.
- On the financial aid side, an important principle is that directing funds to students with significant financial need, instead of focusing on changing the profile of the entering class, is most effective. These students are more price-sensitive than their more affluent peers, and their behavior is more likely to be affected by small changes in price.
- In addition to putting money in students' pockets, financial aid programs can provide incentives and opportunities to increase academic progress. There is considerable evidence that financial aid is more effective when combined with access to academic and other student support services and when some portion of the aid is attached to evidence of progress toward a degree.
- Complexity interferes with effectiveness. If students do not understand a financial aid system or have to jump through too many hoops to access funding, they are likely to miss out on the benefits.
- Policies that subsidize patterns that are already common among much of the student body are likely to be expensive relative to their impact because many students will be rewarded for choices they would have made even without the added incentives.

This report examines several institutional strategies aimed at diminishing the financial barriers facing low-income students. We describe the strategies, provide examples, and discuss evidence about outcomes when available. We also discuss potential advantages, disadvantages, and implementation issues that institutions should consider before trying any of these strategies to improve student affordability and success.

This report does not provide an exhaustive analysis of efforts occurring at regional universities. Institutions not mentioned are likely employing some exceptional programs very successfully. But the universities highlighted in this report are providing constructive routes to improving the success rate of many at-risk students. Our aim is to identify innovative tuition and financial aid strategies as a way to start a conversation across these institutions and to provide a framework for comprehensive public universities to develop their own initiatives.

We highlight five *tuition-related* strategies with the potential to increase student success and improve affordability:

- block tuition programs, allowing students to enroll for enough credit hours per semester to graduate on time without incurring extra charges;
- added charges for accumulating many more credits than necessary to graduate;
- flexible tuition payment plans, allowing for installments instead of larger lump sum payments;
- guarantees that tuition will not go up over four continuous years of enrollment; and
- partial tuition rebates for on-time completion.

The first three tuition policies are most likely to make a difference for students at regional public universities without resulting in significant revenue loss for institutions.

We highlight six *financial aid* policies with the potential to increase student success and improve affordability:

- tying a component of need-based aid to academic progress, rewarding students for completing courses in a timely manner;
- tying the receipt of institutional financial aid to participation in academic and other support services on campus;
- implementing an emergency aid program that helps students facing unexpected financial difficulties;
- facilitating child care arrangements for students with children, providing information, subsidies or even on-campus care;
- disbursing financial aid funds periodically over the term rather than in one lump sum, to ease money management problems and provide incentives for students to remain in good academic standing; and
- assisting students with gaining access to the public income support programs for which they are eligible.

The first three strategies provide immediate and visible incentives for students to progress in their studies or remove unanticipated barriers to that progress. The remaining three strategies offer other constructive approaches to financial aid that have the potential to make a significant difference in the success rates of some groups of students.

A summary of the strategies discussed in this paper can be found in Appendix A.

TUITION POLICIES

It is tempting to say that lower tuition and fee levels are the best strategy for diminishing the financial barriers faced by low-income students. From this perspective, campuses will find it frustrating that they frequently have little authority for setting tuition and fees at public colleges and universities. Policies vary considerably from state to state, and institutions have more control over mandatory fees than over tuition.[2] But even when they have pricing flexibility, institutions have no control over the level of state appropriations, which declined dramatically over most of the country with the financial crisis of the last decade, increasing the need for tuition revenues.

Lowering overall tuition rates may not be the most effective strategy, however, and the reality that few public comprehensive institutions are in a good position to improve affordability by lowering tuition should not stop campuses from thinking creatively about pricing policies. Some strategies for saving students money and encouraging academic success may be possible even within the limits of state policies. Most important, costs to students rise as the time they spend enrolled increases. Tuition structures that encourage academic progress and timely completion of degrees are likely to make college more affordable, even without affecting the annual tuition and fee charges.

Published prices may generate "sticker shock," discouraging both college preparation and enrollment. But understanding how students perceive prices and how they respond to those perceptions opens the door to considering other constructive pricing approaches. How prices and payment options are structured and communicated may make a real difference in student access and success.

Moreover, the net price that students actually pay—either for tuition and fees or for the complete costs of attendance, including room, board, and other expenses, combined—matters more than the published prices. Generous and well-targeted grant aid is likely to be a more effective strategy to provide low-income students with quality educational opportunities than lower published prices across the board.

2 Carlson, A. (2013, September 16). *State Tuition, Fees, and Financial Assistance Policies for Public Colleges and Universities*. State Higher Education Executive Officers. Retrieved March 14, 2014, from http://www.sheeo.org/resources/publications/state-tuition-fees-and-financial-assistance-policies. See also National Conference of State Legislatures (n.d.). *Tuition Policy and Practice: Who Sets Tuition?* from http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/tuition-policy.aspx#who_sets

Unpredictable changes in enrollment, declining state funding, and limited control over price setting have likely discouraged innovation in this realm, and there is little good evidence about the impact of any innovative tuition policies institutions have implemented in their efforts to make college more affordable. But institutions can frequently make some modifications within state regulations, and it is important that they understand and advocate for the politically and economically viable tuition policies most likely to support the success of their students. Several examples of tuition approaches that some institutions have implemented follow.

MOST PROMISING TUITION STRATEGIES

BLOCK TUITION

Some institutions charge the same tuition to all full-time students whether they are registered for 12 credit hours or for up to a maximum 18 hours or more.[3] This "block" or "flat-rate" tuition plan is standard for the 62 AAU-member research universities, but many broader-access public institutions charge a per-credit rate, probably because they enroll larger numbers of part-time students. The maximum number of credit hours for which students can enroll without incurring extra charges varies. It may be 15, 16, 18 or 21, or there may be no limit.

Examples

- *Adams State University* in Colorado changed its pricing policy so students are charged the same price for any number of credits between 11 and 21. Adams State makes sure that students understand that they can take "free classes."
- The Oklahoma Board of Regents recently approved the implementation of the Finish in Four block tuition program at *Oklahoma State University* starting in the 2014-15 academic year. Students taking 12 to 18 credit hours will pay a set price, equal to the per-credit-hour price of 15 credits. Part-time undergraduate students and graduate students are not included in the block tuition plan. The block rate "serves as one of OSU's strategies to help students stay on target and finish college in 4 years."[4]
- *Northern Michigan University* charges by the credit hour if students are enrolled for fewer than 12 hours, but charges flat tuition for 12 to 18 credit hours.[5] In contrast, at *Western Michigan University,* there is a flat rate for 12 to 15 credit hours, but additional charges for the 16th credit and beyond.[6]
- At the *University of Texas-Arlington,* flat-rate tuition applies from 12 credit hours up and would apply to a student taking as many as 30 credit hours in a semester.

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3 The credit hours cited here are standard for semester systems, but may differ in quarter systems or other calendars.

4 Oklahoma State University (n.d.). Block Rate Benefits and Details: Finish in Four. Retrieved March 25, 2014, from http://bursar.okstate.edu/block-rate-information

5 Northern Michigan University (n.d.). Tuition and Fees. Retrieved February 25, 2014, from http://www.nmu.edu/tuition.

6 Western Michigan University (n.d.). Tuition and Fees for Fall 2014-Spring 2015. Retrieved July 8, 2014, from http://www.wmich.edu/registrar/tuition/semester/.

- *George Mason University* in Virginia charges flat tuition for 12 to 16 credit hours.[7] In contrast, *Virginia Commonwealth University* has moved away from flat-rate tuition, probably in an effort to increase revenues.[8]

Evidence

When *Adams State University* in Colorado switched to block pricing, the institution also implemented a Finish in Four campaign and modified its merit scholarship program to encourage 15-credit enrollment. As a result, it is not possible to isolate the impact of the tuition policy. However, between fall 2010 and fall 2013, the average credit hours per undergraduate student increased from 12.2 to 13.7, suggesting that many students increased their enrollment intensity.

There is evidence that public relations campaigns alone can have a significant impact on the number of credits for which students enroll. For example, the Hawaii 15 to Finish campaign was designed to counter the common perception, consistent with federal financial aid rules, that a 12-credits-per-semester load is sufficient for full-time students. The effort has resulted in a significant increase in the number of students enrolling for 15 credit hours, and the reports suggest a positive impact on persistence.[9]

IMPLEMENTING BLOCK TUITION

Potential advantages

Charging students for credit hours beyond the minimum 12 required to be considered full-time under federal financial aid rules creates a situation where students pay higher tuition in order to register for the number of credits they need to complete in a timely manner (an average of 15 per semester) but receive no extra federal funding to support that higher cost. Charging students extra for the credit hours they need to graduate on time is likely to have a negative impact on timely completion. In contrast, block tuition eliminates the financial disincentive for students to take the credits they need.

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7 George Mason University (n.d.). Student Accounts Office. Frequently Asked Questions. Enrollment over 16 credits (Undergraduate Students Only). Retrieved March 11, 2014, from http://studentaccounts.gmu.edu/faq.html#enrollment

8 Students admitted in or after the fall 2013 semester are charged on a per-credit-hour rate if they are enrolled for less than 15 credit hours. The 15th hour and additional hours are charged at a lower per-credit-hour rate. Mandatory fees do not increase beyond the 12th hour. Continuing students who enrolled before fall 2013 are charged a flat rate for 12 to 18 credit hours. Virginia Commonwealth University (n.d.). Fall 2013-Spring 2014 Tuition, Fees & Other Expenses: Undergraduate, Graduate & Professional Students. Retrieved July 8, 2014, http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/media/student-affairs/enrollment-services/student-accounting/docs/14-15TuitionFeesSchedule(2).pdf.

9 University of Hawaii System (n.d.). 15 to Finish. Graduate on Time and Get Ahead. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from http://www.15tofinish.com/data.html

For example, if students pay more for 120 credit hours accumulated 12 at a time over 10 semesters than for 120 credit hours accumulated 15 at a time over 8 semesters, they have an added incentive to progress more rapidly. Since students are likely to earn 14 credits one semester and 16 another, the common 12-to-18 range for block tuition is appropriate.[10]

Potential disadvantages

Institutions may be concerned about losing the extra revenue associated with the credit hours that are "free" under the block tuition plan. However, there are likely to be savings associated with students graduating in a timely manner. It is also possible that not charging for additional classes will encourage students to enroll in more classes than they intend to complete and then drop those that they find least appealing.

Legal or regulatory barriers

Only state tuition restrictions would create legal or regulatory barriers to a block tuition policy.

Potential support and opposition

Institutions that currently charge for each additional credit hour may have concerns about revenue losses from switching to block tuition. There could also be some criticism that students enrolling for only 12 credit hours are subsidizing students who take additional courses under this policy.

Costs

If the current price for 12 credit hours becomes the price for 12 credit hours or more, there will be a revenue loss of the amount students are currently paying for their additional credits. However, over time there need be no cost to this policy. It is possible to adjust the price so that students who take 12 credit hours are paying somewhat more than they would have paid under a linear tuition policy, while students who are enrolled for 18 credit hours are paying less. The effectiveness of the policy depends on students graduating more quickly.

Other implementation issues

The change in pricing policy that eliminates extra charges for credits beyond 12 in one semester should not be problematic unless it involves an increase in the per-credit-hour price, which might be intended to make the policy revenue-neutral. For this reason, it is probably advisable to plan ahead so that the change is not accompanied by an unusual increase in prices.

10 The largest cost involved in a fifth year is forgone earnings, not tuition, but this cost may be less visible to students.

Scalability

Block tuition plans are not difficult to implement and should not have serious unintended consequences. However, for institutions where most students enroll closer to half-time than to 12 credit hours per semester, the policy is not likely to have a measurable impact. This policy targets students who are technically full-time but are not taking enough credit hours to earn a bachelor's degree in four years.

HIGHER CHARGES FOR SURPLUS CREDITS

A policy that might, at first glance, seem inconsistent with the strategy of allowing students to enroll for additional credits each semester without incurring additional charges is to charge students for additional credits earned beyond the number required to complete a bachelor's degree. While this system may create an added expense for some students, it can promote timely completion. According to SHEEO, policies of this sort exist in nine states.[11]

Examples

- In North Carolina, effective fall 2010, undergraduate students at public institutions are subject to a 50 percent tuition surcharge if they take more than 4 years and more than 140 credits to earn a bachelor's degree.[12]
- In Texas, resident undergraduates who exceed the credit hour limits of their programs are charged out-of-state tuition rates. Students are allowed 30 credit hours beyond the required number before this policy affects them.[13]
- Florida public universities have an "excess credit hour surcharge." As of fall 2012, that charge is 100 percent for credits beyond 100 percent of the required program hours.[14]
- Similar policies exist in other states, including Arizona, Massachusetts, Texas, and Virginia.

Evidence

These are relatively new pricing policies, and we are not aware of any evidence about their effectiveness.

11 Carlson, A. (2013) *Op. Cit.*

12 Education, Fiscal Research Division (2012, December 21). University of North Carolina Tuition Surcharge Policy, Legislative Report. Retrieved March 26, 2014, from http://www.ncleg.net/fiscalresearch/fiscal_briefs/2012_Session_Budget_Fiscal_Briefs/ED_Tuition_Surcharge_Final_2012-12-21web.pdf

13 Texas A&M University (n.d.). Office of the Registrar. Excess Credit Hours. Retrieved March 13, 2014, from http://registrar.tamu.edu/general/excesscredhr.aspx

14 University of South Florida (n.d.). Office of the Registrar. Retrieved March 17, 2014, from http://www.registrar.usf.edu/regurl/os/excess

IMPLEMENTING SURPLUS CREDIT CHARGES

Potential advantages

These policies have the potential to reduce costs for both students and institutions. Students will be encouraged to plan their courses more thoughtfully to avoid accumulating credits that do not count toward their degrees.

Potential disadvantages

For some students, credits beyond the required number are unavoidable. Students who change majors, who have difficulty registering for the courses they need, or who do not have good advising may find that the costs they face in order to finish their degrees are unmanageable.

Legal or regulatory barriers

The feasibility of this tuition policy will depend on the specific tuition policies of the state in which the institution is located.

Potential support and opposition

The strongest support for imposing tuition penalties on students who take more credits than they need to graduate is likely to come from state policymakers who are focused on increasing completion rates while reining in the state's postsecondary costs. Opposition may come from those concerned about how the students who end up having to pay these penalties will be affected, as well as from those who perceive the limits on credit hours as depriving students of full exploration of all learning opportunities.

Costs

Tuition penalties will bring in extra revenues if a significant number of students stay in school despite the extra charges.

Other implementation issues

A tuition penalty for excess credit should be implemented with advance notice so that students who are already on a path to this outcome and for whom it is too late to change course will not be penalized.

In deciding the details of the policy, institutions should carefully consider the circumstances that will lead students to accumulate extra credits. The policy should be designed to modify the behavior of the outliers and to change expectations about what is normal. It should not be designed to impose extra charges on students whose situations are relatively routine and unavoidable.

The treatment of transfer credits is an important issue that should be resolved in a way that does not overly penalize students who bring credits from other institutions that may not meet the specific requirements for their degrees.

Scalability

Tuition penalties for excess courses could be implemented at a wide variety of institutions.

FLEXIBLE PAYMENT OPTIONS

Lump sum tuition and fee payments are likely to be particularly difficult for low-income students who face liquidity constraints. The burden of tuition and fee payments can be reduced without lowering the price if the timing of the required payments is carefully designed. Tuition payment plans that allow students to spread their payments out over the course of the semester can ease the burden on students without reducing revenues. Some universities rely on plans offered through third parties, while others have monthly payment plans of their own.

Examples

Third-party programs include FACTS Tuition Management (Nelnet), Tuition Payment Plan (Sallie Mae), and Tuition Management Systems (Key Bank). Students generally make monthly payments to these third-party programs. There is usually a small enrollment fee but no interest. The first payment is due a couple of months before the beginning of the term, and there are penalties for late or missed payments.

Examples of individual institution plans include:

- *California State University-Fullerton*—The Installment Payment Plan allows students to pay in three monthly installments. This plan is not available to students who have been or are delinquent in their payments or to students who receive financial aid. There is a small processing fee.
- *Coastal Carolina University*—For a $35 setup charge per semester, this plan provides the payer an opportunity to pay total tuition, room, and board charges, net of financial aid, in five payments.
- *Western Oregon University*—Under this revolving charge program, a student who does not pay in full on the first designated due date is charged a $12 service fee. Subsequent payments are always due on the first of the following month. Interest is charged on any unpaid balance at the rate of 1 percent per month, or a fraction thereof (12 percent APR). For the student to be considered fully enrolled, at least one-third of all the current term charges plus any past due balance must be paid at the beginning of the term. There is a short-term deferment provision for students who cannot come up with the first third of the semester payment at the beginning of the term.[15]
- *Southeast Missouri State University*—An Installment Payment Plan allows for monthly payments. Charges apply in any month the payment is late.

15 Western Oregon University (n.d.). Tuition and Fees. Fee Payment Information. Retrieved March 10, 2014, from https://www.wou.edu/student/finaid/tuition_fees/fee_info.php

Evidence

A 2004 study of a tuition payment plan at *Prince George's Community College* that involved automatic payments from bank accounts or credit cards, with a small fee but no interest charges for spreading out the payments, provided some evidence of improved retention and increased credit hours.[16] However, the study was not rigorous enough to show clear causation.

IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE TUITION PAYMENT PLANS

Potential advantages

Convenient installment plans for tuition and fee payments can ease the financial burden on students of limited means. These plans can diminish the need for students to borrow, because they can make payments over time as their wages and financial aid funds become available. The psychological barriers of large lump sum payments may be disproportionate to the actual financial burden, and the smaller payments may mitigate this problem.

Potential disadvantages

Students may end up paying more under installment plans if the fees are too high. On the other hand, because the institution loses interest on the funds it receives later than the normal due date, imposing no finance charges at all creates a subsidy to students who postpone their payments.

Legal or regulatory barriers

There are not likely to be legal or regulatory barriers to tuition payment plans.

Potential support and opposition

Tuition payment plans exist in a variety of environments and are not likely to generate significant opposition. However, the plans must be structured carefully to avoid imposing heavy penalties on the participants.

Costs

The cost of a tuition payment plan depends on the exact payment schedule and fees charged. It is possible to design a plan that does not cost the institution anything because the fees compensate for the delayed payments.

Other implementation issues

Institutions can avoid the need to work out the bureaucratic details of a payment plan by relying on an outside vendor. However, it is important that the institution carefully evaluate possible vendors, with an eye to the costs that participating students might incur.

16 Burgess, N. (2004, April/May). Student Retention, Deferred Tuition Payments—A Positive Combination. *Community College Journal*.

In designing an in-house plan, institutions should address a number of questions.

- Should students begin payments early to avoid the loss of interest to the institution, which might necessitate higher fees for all students?
- Should there be three payments? Monthly payments?
- What penalties should be imposed for late payments?
- Should part-time students be eligible for the plan?
- Should students be allowed to enroll in the plan after the beginning of the semester, when it becomes evident that their payments are late?

Scalability

Tuition payment plans with flexible options are a reasonable way to ease the financial burden on students without increasing costs for the institution.

OTHER STRATEGIES WORTH CONSIDERING

FIXED/GUARANTEED TUITION FOR FOUR YEARS

The only tuition policy that has been implemented by a significant number of institutions with the claim that it will help students and families to pay for college is the guaranteed plan, which promises students that their tuition will stay the same over four continuous years of enrollment, or in some cases for five or six years. The plan may cover only tuition, it may also include fees, or it could even include room and board. The basic idea is that the institution sets a price for entering first-year students that is likely higher than the price it otherwise would have charged. The students receive a promise that they will pay the same tuition for four years, regardless of how much the price for new entering students might increase.

The idea of these policies is that they make planning more feasible and also provide an insurance policy against rapid tuition increases. They are not, however, likely to reduce actual costs of attendance, and might even increase charges, particularly for students who leave the institution after a year or two.

Examples

According to the U.S. Department of Education IPEDS data, 320 institutions have guaranteed tuition rates, but only 33 of those are public four-year colleges and universities. The for-profit sector accounts for 231 of the institutions taking this approach.

- The state of Texas recently passed legislation requiring public four-year universities to make fixed tuition for four years an option to first-time students in fall 2014. Some institutions, such as *UT–Dallas*, instituted this type of policy earlier. *Texas A&M University* will require this tuition scheme for all students.

- At *Western Oregon University,* students have a choice of guaranteed tuition or standard tuition. According to the university's website, the Western Tuition Promise, which makes charges higher than they are under standard tuition in the first year, saves money over four years, in addition to protecting students against unexpected price increases.[17]
- *The University of Kansas* has "tuition compact" rates that are four-year fixed, per-credit-hour prices that first-time, degree-seeking freshmen pay. These are students who start at KU immediately after graduating from high school or who have never attended another college or postsecondary institution, regardless of the number of college or advanced placement credits earned. Standard tuition rates are set on an annual basis and apply to students who do not meet the tuition compact criteria.
- At *Eastern Illinois University,* tuition is fixed for four continuous years beginning with the term of a qualifying student's initial enrollment.

Evidence

We are not aware of any rigorous studies of this approach to tuition pricing in affecting persistence and graduation.

IMPLEMENTING FIXED TUITION GUARANTEES

Potential advantages

Fixed tuition promises could potentially have a positive impact on time to degree. A student who fails to complete a bachelor's degree in four years might experience a large tuition increase for the fifth year, as the tuition guarantee expires. The details of the policy would dictate the extent of this financial incentive.

In any case, these policies can assuage concerns of potential students about rising prices. It is not just the actual dollars of payment required that cause difficulty; unexpected increases can cause even those who have planned carefully to struggle with payments.

Potential disadvantages

Although fixed tuition programs make it easier for students and families to plan and reduce the risk of rising prices, these programs are unlikely to actually make college more affordable, since they generally involve higher first-year tuition in exchange for lower tuition later on.

Institutions are not very accurate at estimating their multiyear costs, particularly with unexpected changes in enrollments. This uncertainty, combined with unpredictable state appropriations in the out years, could cause serious budgetary problems for some comprehensive institutions.

17 Western Oregon University (n.d.). Admissions. The Western Tuition Choice. Retrieved March 10, 2014, from http://www.wou.edu/student/admissions/tuition_guarantee.php

The state of Georgia discontinued its guaranteed tuition plan because it turned out to be too expensive for the state. Eliminating the option of increasing the prices paid by the majority of enrolled students proved not to be viable.[18] Diminishing the risk of rising prices for students means increasing the risk of diminished revenues for the institution. *Western Oregon University* was forced to modify its fixed tuition program as a result of diminished state funding, and *Central Michigan University* ended its fixed-for-four plan in 2008 in the face of uncertainty in state funding.[19]

Legal or regulatory barriers

Each state and governing or coordinating board has different structures for setting tuition, and the guaranteed tuition strategy may not be consistent with the restrictions facing many institutions.

Potential support and opposition

The students who will lose out in a guaranteed tuition framework are those who leave school without completing their degrees because the tuition is likely to be higher than it otherwise would have been for the first two years—and lower for the second two years. Moreover, students who do not graduate before the guarantee expires may face large jumps in prices, leading to opposition from advocates for these students.

If the price is set too low, there will be opposition from those concerned about how the institution will continue to provide high-quality education in the face of diminished revenues.

Costs

This tuition strategy has a significant cost if the level is not set high enough to match the average price that would have prevailed over four years. Unless state appropriations are sure to rise, the safest policy will not involve actual expected savings for students.

Other implementation issues

A number of complexities are likely to arise in designing a guaranteed tuition plan. States and institutions should consider key questions carefully in advance.

- Will the guarantee last for only four years, or should a fifth year be included?
- What happens to a student who stops out and then returns? Does the original guarantee still hold?
- How will part-time enrollment be handled under the plan?

18 Turner, D. (2009, April 15). 'Fixed for Four' Tuition Dumped. *On-Line Athens*. Retrieved March 15, 2014, from. http://onlineathens.com/stories/041509/uga_429352978.shtml

19 *Morning Sun News*. (2008, February 15). CMU ends Tuition Promise. Retrieved March 19, 2014, from http://www.themorningsun.com/20080215/cmu-ends-tuition-promise

- If continuous full-time enrollment is a requirement for the plan, what exceptions will be allowed? For example, will medical leaves end plan eligibility?
- What is the backup plan if state appropriations decrease dramatically and unexpectedly for any given year?
- Are institutional accounting structures properly equipped to accurately track the appropriate charges for students in a variety of complicated situations?

Scalability

There are no obvious limitations on the extent to which this plan could be implemented, but it is most appropriate for institutions where full-time consistent enrollment is the norm. Institutions in states with very unpredictable appropriations and enrollments are more likely to run into problems with this strategy.

TUITION REFUNDS FOR COMPLETION

Some institutions have implemented policies that provide partial tuition refunds to students who complete their degrees in four years. This policy is designed to provide an incentive for students to take enough credits each semester to progress in a timely manner.

Some tuition refund programs place a limit on the number of credit hours students can attempt over their four years of study. The refund may come in the last semester before graduation, or in the form of lower tuition as the student progresses.

Examples

- The state of Texas gives a $1,000 tuition refund to students who graduate in four years having attempted no more than three credit hours beyond the required number. The rebate is managed on the campuses and is a draw against their local funds, with no separate appropriation from the state provided. As a result, there is little incentive for the institutions to make the policy widely known. However, the *University of North Texas* is implementing the Eagle Express plan, which offers students who opt into the four-year fixed tuition plan a $3,000 tuition break if they finish in four years or less, in addition to the $1,000 tuition rebate offered by the state.
- *Ball State University* in Indiana offers an on-time graduation scholarship of $500 for students who graduate in four years. Awarded in the final semester before graduation, the practice began in fall 2012. Only Indiana residents who entered the university as first-time full-time students and complete a bachelor's degree within four calendar years are eligible.[20]

20 Ball State University (n.d.). Scholarships and Financial Aid. Completion Scholarship. Retrieved March 21, 2014, from http://cms.bsu.edu/admissions/scholarshipsandfinancialaid/typesofaid/scholarships/ballstatescholarships/completionscholarship

- In a related effort, *Indiana University Kokomo* has a Student Success Tuition Discount Program, which provides discounted tuition for students who stay on track to graduate. If students commit to completing 30 credit hours per year, maintain continuous enrollment, and make satisfactory academic progress, they receive three successive years of discounted tuition. Tuition discounts are 20 percent off the second year, 30 percent off the third year and 40 percent off the fourth year.[21]
- *The University of Baltimore* recently announced that it will offer free tuition for the final semester to students who complete their degrees in four years. The Finish4Free program will first be offered to freshmen enrolling in fall 2014.[22]
- In a related effort, *Indiana State University's* Sycamore Graduation Guarantee assures students who meet a set of conditions, including completing at least 30 credit hours each year and obtaining appropriate advising, that if they are not able to complete a bachelor's degree within four years, the additional credit hours will be free of charge.[23]

Evidence

We are not aware of any studies of this approach to tuition pricing in affecting persistence and graduation.

IMPLEMENTING PARTIAL TUITION REFUNDS FOR TIMELY COMPLETION

Potential advantages

Tuition refund policies provide an added incentive for students to complete their degrees in four years. If successful, these policies can save the students a considerable amount of money. In addition to receiving a refund of $500 or $1,000, for example, the students save the entire tuition for the extra semesters they would have spent in school. The institution may actually save money because average costs are higher for upper-level students, and fifth- or sixth-year students can be replaced with beginning students.

Potential disadvantages

It is likely that a significant portion of the refunds will go to students who would have graduated in four years without the refund policy. Moreover, with average time to completion exceeding five years at many institutions, there will be many students, particularly those who were required to take multiple developmental education classes, for whom this incentive will be irrelevant. The refund is likely to be small relative to the cost of an extra

21 Learn More Indiana (n.d.). Graduation Bonuses. Retrieved March 22, 2014, from http://www.in.gov/cashforcollege/2518.htm

22 The Baltimore Sun. (2014, March 18). University of Baltimore to offer free final semester. Retrieved March 20, 2014, from http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/blog/bs-md-ub-free-tuition-20140318,0,5391184.story#ixzz2wbKiOH8I

23 American Association of State Colleges and Universities (n.d.). AASCU Innovations Exchange. Indiana State University. Facilitating On-Time Completion: The Graduation Guarantee. Retrieved April 2, 2014, from http://www.aascu.org/PROGRAMS/IE/SubmissionDetails.aspx?id=5260&cat=161

year, so the marginal impact may not be enough to make a difference for many students. The risk of subsidizing students likely to succeed in any case, while creating incentives that will not affect many of the highest-need students, requires considerable attention in evaluating these strategies.

Legal or regulatory barriers

Legal or regulatory barriers to tuition refunds seem unlikely.

Potential support and opposition

State officials concerned about timely completion rates are likely to support this approach. The requirement in Texas that institutions implement refund policies is part of an effort to improve the state's postsecondary outcomes.

As with other programs that reward timely completion, there may be opposition from those concerned about penalizing at-risk students for circumstances beyond their control.

Costs

Dollars rebated to students are dollars lost to the institution. In Texas, where the state-mandated program does not come with funding to support it, institutions have not been aggressive in implementing it.

Other implementation issues

Because tuition refund programs subsidize both students who would complete their degrees in four years in the absence of the program and those for whom the incentive makes the difference, it is important to have reliable evidence about the size of the refund necessary to make a real difference in outcomes. If the subsidy is too small, it will not measurably change outcomes. If it is too large, it will provide large subsidies to students (probably disproportionately from affluent families) who have no difficulty graduating in four years.

Situations beyond the students' control that prevent them from graduating in four years must be anticipated. Suppose in the last semester a student is unable to register for a course she needs to graduate. Suppose the death of a parent causes her to lose a semester. Will she become ineligible for the refund?

Before implementing this program, institutions should understand the demographics of the students who currently complete in four years. If effective, the program might change those demographics, encouraging completion among more at-risk students. But it will also reward the students who already are likely to complete in four years.

In estimating the cost of the program, institutions should be sure to allow for the hoped-for outcome—that the number of students earning the refund will be greater than the number now graduating in four years.

Scalability

Tuition refunds will be most effective in institutions where a significant number of students are on the margin of timely completion. At institutions where few students take between four and five years to graduate, the policy is not likely to push many across the line.

Tuition refund policies will not be expensive at institutions with very low four-year graduation rates. But at institutions where a sizable number of students already complete their degrees in four years, the policy will provide an expensive subsidy to students whose behavior is not affected by it.

AID POLICIES

Evidence is accumulating that the structure of aid programs, the incentives incorporated to support student success, and the extent to which funding is combined with other support systems contribute to the effectiveness of financial assistance programs. Seeking additional dollars to help students pay the bills is important, but other strategies that change both institutional and student choices and behaviors may do at least as much to further the goal of helping at-risk students to accomplish their educational goals.

Much of the attention to the needs of low-income and nontraditional students is focused on the community college sector. Experiments on restructuring student aid funded by foundations working to improve educational attainment have, in particular, targeted these institutions. But while broad-access regional public universities frequently have stricter admissions criteria than community colleges, many of the students are similar to those enrolled in public two-year colleges in terms of the financial, demographic, and academic characteristics likely to create challenges as they pursue their degrees. (See Appendix B for details on student characteristics by sector.) This sector may be able to learn at least as much from innovative aid policies in community colleges as from the practices of the four-year public sector as a whole.

MOST PROMISING AID STRATEGIES

PERFORMANCE-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS

Most grant aid with the primary goal of diminishing financial barriers for low-income students is allocated purely on the basis of financial need. Federal Pell Grants constitute about 60 percent of the grant aid received by dependent students from low-income families and independent students at public master's universities. About 80 percent of the total grant aid received by these students is from Pell Grants, state grants based only on need, or need-based institutional grants.[24]

24 U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12). National Center for Education Statistics, PowerStats. Calculations by the author.

Performance-based scholarships (PBS) supplement this foundational aid, providing increased funding to students who complete at least a specified number of credit hours while maintaining a satisfactory grade point average. The details of the policies can vary, but the funding is dependent on progress while in college, not on the academic achievement of students before they enroll in college. Funds may be distributed periodically over the course of the term.

Examples

- The most visible existing examples of performance-based scholarships at individual institutions come from the PBS Demonstration project run by MDRC, a nonprofit research organization.[25] The project has sites in Arizona, California, Florida, New Mexico, New York, and Ohio, and it builds on earlier findings from Louisiana. Eligible populations vary, but all are low-income and generally Pell-eligible. Award amounts range from $500 per semester (or $333 per quarter) to $1,500 per semester and continue for one to four semesters, with maximum total award amounts ranging from $1,000 to $4,500. The funds are paid directly to students, rather than to their colleges or universities, and students can use the funds as they choose. The programs apply to students enrolled at least half-time and require at least a C average. Some of the programs require that students meet with an adviser and/or complete a tutoring requirement.
- *Adams State University* in Colorado and the *University of Texas-Arlington* are among the institutions that have already implemented or are in the process of adding incentives for credit completion to their institutional scholarship programs.

Evidence

There is considerable evidence that, in combination with Pell Grants and other pure, need-based aid, supplemental grant aid that depends on the timely accumulation of credits and a minimal grade point average improves academic progress among high-need students. In her study of the West Virginia Promise program, Judith Scott-Clayton found that linking the receipt of aid to a minimum GPA and course load had a measurable impact on student progress at West Virginia public universities. The scholarship increased five-year graduation rates by 4 percentage points and on-time graduation rates by nearly 7 percentage points. The achievement incentives appeared to be an important mechanism driving these increases. The scholarship increased GPAs and credits completed in the first three years of college, but in the fourth and final year of the scholarship—while students were still receiving the money but no longer faced the achievement incentives—the program's effect nearly disappeared. [26]

MDRC has conducted a set of randomized trial experiments around the country to test the impact of performance-based scholarships on student retention and progress. MDRC launched the project in 2008 to test

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25 MDRC. (2013, August). Performance-Based Scholarship Demonstration. Retrieved April 2, 2014, from http://www.mdrc.org/project/performance-based-scholarship-demonstration#featured_content

26 Scott-Clayton, J. (2011). On Money and Motivation: A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Financial Incentives for College Achievement, *Journal of Human Resources* 46(3): Summer 2011, pp. 614-646.

a strategy for addressing two policy objectives: increasing the financial support available to low-income students and creating an incentive for these students to complete their courses and make more timely progress toward degrees. The program was designed based on positive results in Louisiana for older, mostly unmarried female students.[27]

The initial evaluation findings provide some evidence that PBS can improve academic outcomes without unintended negative consequences (for example, students attempting fewer credits in order to keep their grades up). At most of the sites, students in the program groups earned more credits by the end of the first year than students in the control groups but so far, the program does not appear to increase the proportion of students who stay in college for a second year. However, in Ohio, the site functioning for the longest time period, performance-based scholarships did increase the proportion of students earning a degree or certificate. Two years after random assignment, the percentage of students attaining degrees in the program group was 3.6 percentage points higher than in the control group (a difference of 21 percent). In the third year, the difference was 3.5 percentage points (a difference of 15 percent). These experiments suggest that the scholarships generally have a small but measurable impact on student success.

In their 2013 overview of the effectiveness of student aid programs, Dynarski and Scott-Clayton conclude that pure grant aid, without any strings attached, appears to be less effective than programs with explicit incentives. For students who have already decided to enroll, grants that tie financial aid to academic achievement appear to boost college outcomes such as persistence more than do grants with no strings attached.[28]

IMPLEMENTING PERFORMANCE-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS

Potential advantages

Performance-based scholarships provide low-income students with both extra funds and added and visible incentives to make academic progress. While the benefits of completing a degree in a timely manner are large, they may seem remote when students are at the early stages of their programs. PBS programs can make the rewards imminent and influential, even if they are not large.

Potential disadvantages

The available evidence suggests that well-designed PBS programs have a measurable impact on student progress, but that impact is likely to be larger if the dollars are combined with academic supports. The impact may not persist beyond the semester that the extra aid is awarded.

27 Patel, R., Richburg-Hayes, L., de la Campa, E., & Rudd, T. (2013, August). *Performance-Based Scholarships: What Have We Learned? Interim Findings from the PBS Demonstration*. MDRC. Retrieved April 2, 2014, from http://www.mdrc.org/publication/performance-based-scholarships-what-have-we-learned

28 Dynarski, S., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2013). Financial Aid Policy: Lessons from the Research. *The Future of Children, 23*(1). Retrieved February 24, 2014, from http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/23_01_04.pdf

Legal or regulatory barriers

Students receiving federal need-based aid will lose access to subsidized federal loans and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) if their aid packages exceed their federally determined need. However, the over-award regulations are unlikely to create issues for the underfunded students whom these programs target.

Potential support and opposition

There is an important distinction between "merit aid," which is usually based on pre-college academic performance and favors students from more privileged backgrounds, and need-based aid programs designed to provide incentives for postsecondary progress and success. Nonetheless, considering academic performance in allocating aid to low-income students may raise concerns about limiting access.[29] Some of the students struggling most will not qualify for the performance-based scholarships, which could generate opposition among some constituencies.

Costs

If the PBS program is an add-on to existing aid programs, it will require additional funding from the state, institutional resources, or an external source. For institutions that already have institutional grant programs, it is possible to redirect some of the funds into a PBS program.

Other implementation issues

- *Attainable benchmarks*: Setting academic standards that are too high may limit the effectiveness of the program. More students meet their academic benchmarks when those benchmarks are more realistic and attainable. The goal should be incentives for successful program completion, not excellence.
- *Avoiding complexity:* There is a risk of designing a program that is too complicated. Students should have a clear understanding of what they have to do in order to qualify for the extra funding and should not face significant bureaucratic hurdles.
- *Targeted aid*: PBS programs can be targeted to specific groups of students facing hurdles to completing their degrees. Institution-wide policies will be much more expensive and will subsidize students who would succeed even in the absence of the extra assistance.
- *Collaborative support services*: Institutions should consider supplementing the PBS funds with academic and personal support services to maximize the impact on student success.

29 Baum, S., Breneman, D. W., Chingos, M. M., Ehrenberg, R. G., Fowler, P., Hayek, J., Heller, D. E., Jones, A. G., Longanecker, D. A., Nesbitt, T. J., Scott-Clayton, J., Turner, S. E., Wellman, J. V., & Whitehurst, G. J. (2012, May). *Beyond Need and Merit: Strengthening State Grant Programs.* Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings. Retrieved February 12, 2014, from http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2012/5/08 grants chingos whitehurst/0508_state_grant_chingos_whitehurst.pdf. Report provides an in-depth discussion of combining incentives with aid targeted to students with financial need.

Scalability

PBS programs can be implemented at a variety of institutions and with a diverse group of low-income student populations. Institutions have been able to put processes in place to monitor students' progress and pay them appropriately. Student survey responses show that institutions have been able to convey clear messages about the scholarships' requirements. Some institutions have used the program to engage students in other services provided on campus, such as tutoring and advising.

Institutions should not expect dramatic increases in completion rates as a result of these programs, but they should expect them to help some of their students face the combined financial and academic challenges of postsecondary education. Rewards for academic progress appear to make a real difference.

COMBINING AID WITH SUPPORT SERVICES

A variety of institutional grant programs require students to avail themselves of academic and personal support services on campus. Because the problems students face are not purely financial, and because some financial difficulties arise from lack of understanding about financial aid or about financial management in general, these services can improve the effectiveness of the dollars provided.

These programs may require students to attend either financial literacy or academic advising and support sessions in order to receive aid.

Examples:

- Some of the MDRC performance-based scholarship sites combine support services with scholarship dollars. In the Louisiana Opening Doors program, students were required to meet with an advisor in order to receive each aid installment. The PBS program at the *University of New Mexico* has the same requirement. The programs in Florida and Arizona require students to meet with tutors.

- The Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) in New York state operates at private institutions. In addition to full tuition scholarships, it provides strong academic support services tailored to the needs of the participating low-income students, who are also academically underprepared. This program has been successful in graduating students for many years.

- *Iowa State University* has a need-based scholarship program, the Christina Hixson Opportunity Award, which requires students to participate in a learning community. Learning communities provide close-knit support systems for students unfamiliar with college life. The program provides additional opportunities such as participation in a peer leadership program in the second year of college. ISU also has a Student Support Services Program (a TRIO program) that provides grants of about $325 per student to those who consistently take advantage of the support services offered and meet other requirements.

- *Western Oregon University* has established a strong connection between the financial aid office and the academic counseling office to ensure that students receiving financial aid get supplementary academic support. Students who receive academic warnings must participate in a jointly developed workshop.

- At *Indiana State University,* the Center for Student Success works with students in a variety of support service areas to increase their chances of completing degrees. The Twenty-First Century Scholars program, through which the university has committed funds to assist students with on-time graduation, is associated with the center. Originally funded through state resources but now funded with university dollars, the center provides multiple forms of support, including financial assistance, community service opportunities, financial aid workshops, and personal guidance.

- *Kentucky State University* has established the Green 2 Gold Process. This need-based assistance program, mainly for students with long-term financial shortfalls, offers something different from other work-study programs. Supervised by persons in the students' field on campus or in the community, this program affords the students real work experience while paying off their unpaid college account balances. It provides opportunities that will enhance students' success when they enter the job market, including training on resume writing, internships, and permanent job opportunities. Funded by over $1.4 million of the university's own resources, this program is affording students a way to fund their college credits, get job training, and obtain their degrees.

- *Concord University,* a public college in West Virginia, offers the Bonner Scholarship Program, funded by the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation.[30] This program, which involves some matching funds from the institution, requires that students participate in community service. The program is designed to have an impact on the entire college and the surrounding community, in addition to the participating students. Each Bonner Scholar must give 10 ten hours a week of community service and receives $1,250 per semester paid directly to the student in installments at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the semester. Bonner Scholars are expected to complete two summer service internships of at least 280 hours each. For completing each of these summer internships, the students receive $1,500 at the end of each summer of service. Additional funding is available to cover summer expenses, and some scholars receive funding either to repay loans or to support graduate study after they complete their undergraduate degrees.

- The Bonner Foundation supports students at 24 colleges, and a number of other institutions participate in the Bonner Leader Program, generally with less generous funding.[31] Some Bonner programs are associated with AmeriCorps, which provides slots for Bonner Scholars. Others rely on Federal Work-Study funds. The Bonner Foundation staff provides technical assistance and training to all Bonner Network schools. The approximately 60 participating institutions include *California State University-Los Angeles*; *Montclair State University (New Jersey); Rutgers University Camden, New Brunswick, and Newark;* the *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*; and *Western Kentucky University*.

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30 Bonner Network Wiki (n.d.). Bonner Program. Retrieved March 29, 2014, from http://bonnernetwork.pbworks.com/w/page/13112067/Bonner Program

31 Bonner Network Wiki (n.d.) Difference between Bonner Scholar and Bonner Leader Programs. Retrieved March 29, 2014, from http://bonnernetwork.pbworks.com/w/page/13112363/Difference between Bonner Scholar and Bonner Leader Programs

Evidence

There is evidence that adding student support services for financial aid recipients may be more effective than using the same funding to provide additional grant aid. The combination of dollars and academic support appears to be more effective in helping students to succeed than either strategy alone.

A study at a large public Canadian university that tested financial incentives for low-income students combined with academic support services found achievement gains by the end of the first year only for students who received both the incentive and the support services—and only for women, not for men. Students in the combined group were much more likely to use services than those offered services with no opportunity to receive fellowships. Financial incentives apparently had the short-term effect of increasing the rate at which students sought academic support. Although women in both the combined and the fellowship-only treatment groups had markedly better fall-term grades, first-year GPAs were significantly higher only in the combined group. The combined group also earned more credits and had a significantly lower rate of academic probation at year's end. Women in the combined group continued to outperform the others in the second year. [32]

Evidence from the MDRC performance-based scholarship studies confirms the importance of combining funding with support services. Randomized trials of a scholarship program at two community colleges in New York City provided significant funding for students contingent on maintaining a minimum GPA and number of credits, but provided no services to the adult students with developmental education needs who participated. The results showed no impact on the total number of credits earned over two years, even though it did increase full-time enrollment.[33]

The Bonner Scholarship Program has been studied, but with a focus on developing engaged citizens rather than on succeeding in college.[34]

IMPLEMENTING LINKAGE OF AID TO SUPPORT SERVICES

Potential advantages

Combining financial aid dollars with support services provides students with guidance in tackling their academic issues at the same time that their financial burdens are eased. Moreover, students benefit from assistance with managing their limited financial resources.

Involvement in community service may provide personal growth experiences with positive long-term impact.

32 Angrist, J., Lang, D., & Oreopoulos, P. (2009). Incentives and Services for College Achievement: Evidence from a Randomized Trial. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, *1*(1): 136-163.

33 Patel, R. & Rudd, T. (2012). *Can Scholarships Alone Help Students Succeed? Lessons from Two New York City Community Colleges*. New York: MDRC.

34 Keen, C, & Hall, K. (2009). Engaging with Difference Matters: Longitudinal Student Outcomes of Co-Curricular Service-Learning Programs. *The Journal of Higher Education, 80*(1):59-79.

Potential disadvantages

Institutions have to identify resources to provide these extra support services. With state funds becoming more limited, these resources may be harder to find.

Institutions are likely to find that students not served by these special services may need them and may find it necessary to expand these services, straining their limited resources even further.

Legal or regulatory barriers

There are no apparent legal or regulatory barriers to providing support services to students.

Potential support and opposition

Opposition to linking support services to student aid is likely to come only from those concerned that aid funds might be denied to students who are unwilling to take advantage of the support services, leaving some of the most at-risk students without subsidies.

Costs

Support services require institutional funding. Some of the services may be provided more inexpensively online, but personnel costs are likely to be the key component of this expense.

Community service opportunities require funding, but a number of institutions have managed to find that funding through other programs such as Federal Work-Study and AmeriCorps.

Other implementation issues

- Support services must be designed carefully to provide the most effective support possible and tailored to the circumstances of individual students.
- Institutions should be prepared to enforce the link between grant dollars and support services, withholding funds from students unwilling to make the effort to use those services.
- Community service programs require significant staffing infrastructure. The programs described above rely both on campus staff and on support from the Bonner Foundation.

Scalability

All institutions enrolling low-income students in need of academic support should have strong infrastructures for providing these services and for increasing financial literacy. Linking these services to incremental aid programs should not be problematic, as long as the funding is available.

EMERGENCY AID

Need-based financial aid is generally allocated on the basis of financial aid applications that are completed well in advance of the academic year. The principle on which the Federal Methodology—the formula for allocating federal aid—is based is that income during the calendar year prior to enrollment can serve as a reasonable proxy for the resources available to students while they are in school.

No matter how generous need-based aid is, it cannot account for unforeseen problems that arise while students are enrolled. There is no way to predict instances of a commuter student's car breaking down, of a student who is a parent losing the child care provided by a family member, or of unexpected medical problems. These are examples of circumstances that can prevent students from getting through the semester. The availability of emergency funding may prevent them from interrupting, delaying, or abandoning their studies.

Emergency financial aid can be in the form of supplemental grants, financial aid advances, or small personal loans. Most programs require a minimum GPA and a minimum level of course registration.

A strategy related to emergency aid is advancing financial aid funds. This may be done on an emergency basis or as a general practice. For example, some institutions offer vouchers that allow students to buy books and supplies at the campus bookstore and have the payment deducted from their financial aid refund when it comes in. Another strategy for reducing the burden of textbook purchases is a textbook rental program. *Western Oregon University* offers textbooks for rent at prices much lower than the purchase price. Originally funded by a FIPSE grant, the program became successful and sustainable. The program has encouraged faculty to thoughtfully assess the books they place on their required reading lists by considering the costs placed on students' shoulders.

Examples

- *Austin Community College* has a fund to help students facing unforeseen financial emergencies and catastrophic events that may disrupt their education. Emergency funds are not intended to pay for routine expenses or to be a consistent supplement to a student's education funding. The maximum award is $500 per student. To be eligible, students must have completed at least 15 credits at the college and be registered for at least 6 credits in the semester in which the funds would apply. Application processes may involve in-person interviews, written applications or both.

- *Pasadena City College* offers short-term emergency loans for unexpected expenses, books and supplies. Loans are typically processed within 24 to 48 hours and must be repaid within 30 days.

- *The University of California-Berkeley* makes short-term loans available to students in good standing who are faced with sudden, unforeseen financial need. Students who meet the stringent eligibility requirements may receive between $775 and $1,300 in emergency funds. Loans are interest-free and are due within 60 days of disbursement.

- *Georgia State University* uses its Panther Retention Grants to support students when they are unable to pay their tuition and fees in full. The program applies to students who have genuine unmet need and are on track for graduation, and it gives preference to students who are close to paying in full. The university initiated the program after finding that the majority of students who were dropped from classes for nonpayment had satisfactory grades and owed less than $1,000 on their tuition bills. After a successful trial, the university expanded the program in fall 2012, awarding $600,000 to more than 700 students. The program awarded 2,600 grants during the 2012-13 academic year.[35] Recipients must complete three online financial literacy modules and fill out a study skills questionnaire to receive the funding. [36]

- *Scholarship America's Dreamkeepers Emergency Assistance Program,* which received startup funding from a consortium of foundations, is designed to assist students who are experiencing temporary hardships at 43 institutions, most of which are community colleges or technical colleges. In addition to financial assistance, the program provides access to services such as financial literacy and money management guidance.[37]

  The Dreamkeepers programs differ across colleges, which are responsible for designing the programs and raising funds, both to sustain their programs and to continue receiving matching funds from the initiative. Some of the programs are grants, some are loans, and some are a mix. Some institutions just advance pending financial aid funds, recouping the money when the aid comes in. Some institutions give the funds to the students, while others pay third parties directly. The most frequent requests from students are for assistance with housing expenses, child care, and utilities. Aid recipients may also benefit by becoming better connected to other services available both on and off campus.

Evidence

Georgia State University has collected data on its emergency tuition program and reports having brought 2,600 students back to school. With average grants of $900 in 2012-13, 70 percent of the seniors aided proceeded to graduate within two semesters. The university has scaled the program up from $40,000 to $2.5 million because of the data on its effectiveness and the judgment that it is a good business model, bringing in more tuition and fee revenue.[38]

35 Georgia State University. (2013, October 22). 2013 Complete College Georgia Update. Georgia State University's Student Success Initiatives. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from http://www.usg.edu/diversity_summit/documents/TimRenick_Student_Success_Update_10_22_13.pdf

36 Selingo, J. (2013, May 20). How a Little Data Can Solve One of Higher Education's Biggest Problems. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from https://chronicle.com/article/How-a-Little-Data-Can-Solve/139347/. See for more detail on Georgia State's approach.

37 Scholarship America (n.d.). Current Dreamkeepers Colleges. Retrieved March 22, 2014, from https://scholarshipamerica.org/dk_collegelist.php

38 Information provided by Vice Provost, Chief Enrollment Officer Timothy Renick

MDRC studied the Dreamkeepers Emergency Financial Aid Program but did not have the opportunity to design the study in a way that would make it possible to clearly identify causal impact. However, students and college administrators think that the program is effective in keeping disadvantaged students in school and that recipients are as likely to persist as other students in their institutions. [39]

IMPLEMENTING EMERGENCY AID

Potential advantages

Emergency aid has the advantage of being able to target limited funds to students with the most urgent needs. Small amounts of money can make it possible for low-income students to overcome immediate hurdles that would otherwise cause them to leave school. Both the dollars and the psychological impact of the support from the institution in a time of crisis are likely to make a difference.

The experience with the Dreamkeepers program suggests that emergency aid is appealing for donors, so it may be more feasible to raise money for this sort of program than for other institutional financial aid programs.

Potential disadvantages

Students may have difficulty repaying emergency aid that is in the form of loans. If the funds are taken from their pending financial aid, they may end up short again toward the end of the term.

Some program designs could diminish the incentives for students to manage their funds well, if they are confident that the institution will bail them out if they get into trouble.

Legal or regulatory barriers

There are no obvious legal or regulatory barriers to implementation of an emergency aid program.

Potential support and opposition

Emergency aid is generally a well-received idea, but support for the program will depend on the source of funding. Taking funding from other targeted student aid programs could lead to opposition.

Costs

Emergency loan programs will not carry significant costs, as long as the repayment rate is high. Grant programs will, of course, require funding. Programs that support students in paying their tuition may increase overall revenues by preventing students from dropping out.

39 Geckeler, C. (2008). Helping Community College Students Cope with Financial Emergencies: Lessons from the Dreamkeepers and Angel Fund Emergency Financial Aid Programs. New York: MDRC.

Other implementation issues

- A challenge in designing emergency aid programs is finding the balance between ensuring that the funds are used prudently and managing to respond quickly to student emergencies.
- The definition of a financial emergency must be carefully thought out.
- The administrative structure must be flexible but strong enough to responsibly monitor the program.
- A program like that at *Georgia State University* has the potential to encourage students not to make their full payments, in order to benefit from the subsidy. Other programs could have similar problems if emergencies are not strictly defined. While it is important for students to be aware that emergency aid programs exist, safeguards must be in place to minimize this type of unintended consequence.

Scalability

Emergency aid programs are likely to be effective at a wide variety of institutions. Many institutions likely have some provisions to support students facing unanticipated hardship, but developing or strengthening these programs might be considered a priority for available funding.

OTHER STRATEGIES WORTH CONSIDERING

AID LIKE A PAYCHECK

When students receive financial aid that exceeds their tuition and fee bills, the institution gives them "refunds." Pell Grants and state grants combined are unlikely to exceed tuition and fees outside of the community college sector, but when federal loans are added in, many four-year college students do get some of their financial aid money in cash. Distributing the funds periodically over the course of the semester, rather than in one lump, may mitigate budgeting problems students face with their limited funds.

Examples

MDRC is conducting an experiment to test the impact of changing the aid distribution schedule. The program seeks to address poor financial management that may force a student to increase work hours or drop classes late in the semester in order to meet financial needs. Moreover, biweekly checks may act as an incentive that prompts positive student behavior—in this case, an incentive to stay enrolled in college in order to receive the full financial aid refund.[40]

40 Ware, M., Weissman, E., & McDermott, D. (2013). *Aid Like a Paycheck: Incremental Aid to Promote Student Success*. MDRC Policy Brief. Retrieved March 3, 2014, from http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/ALAP%20brief.pdf

Evidence

It is too soon to know how effective the MDRC Aid-Like-a-Paycheck program will be.

IMPLEMENTING AID LIKE A PAYCHECK

Potential advantages

While many community college students receive Pell Grant refunds, the higher tuition at four-year institutions means that this program will probably be feasible primarily for loan proceeds. Periodic disbursements could make students more thoughtful about whether they really need to borrow the full amount they have been awarded.

It is also possible that treating the funds like a paycheck can make students treat their studies more like a job and the financial aid as compensation for that work.

This strategy may also discourage any students who enroll only to obtain the aid funds, with no serious intent to complete the academic term.

Potential disadvantages

If students' expenses are weighted more heavily toward the beginning of the term because of book purchases or other issues, making them wait for their funds could cause problems.

Legal or regulatory barriers

Biweekly disbursement of federal aid funds fits within the U.S. Department of Education regulations.

Potential support and opposition

People focused on financial literacy and financial planning skills are likely to support this program. If not properly implemented, the program could add work and bureaucracy in some campus offices.

Costs

Once the distribution mechanism is set up, there should be no incremental cost to this aid distribution system.

Other implementation issues

The program has been successfully implemented at two community colleges. The implementation has been relatively straightforward, with colleges incorporating the model into their current disbursement practices and adjusting internal programming and procedures as needed. There is no reason to believe the situation would be different on four-year university campuses.

The program is likely to be strengthened if accompanied by some form of budgeting or money management training for students.

Scalability

This program should be feasible at any institution where a significant number of students are receiving financial aid in excess of the amount they owe the institution.

CHILD CARE

Providing in-kind services rather than flexible funding may be both an effective strategy for students and financially viable for institutions in some cases. In particular, inadequate child care may interfere with the ability of students with children to succeed. In focus groups conducted with community college students in the context of the Opening Doors project, students named stable child care as one of the key factors in determining their ability to enroll and succeed in college.[41]

Many institutions provide subsidized on-campus child care, referral services, or related support. In 2011, 55 percent of public four-year institutions reported having a campus-based children's center, while 47 percent of community colleges reported having onsite children's centers.[42]

Access to federal- and state-funded Child Care and Development Block Grant assistance for low-income families varies according to state policies. Many states have waiting lists for assistance, and in about half of the states, students cannot qualify for child care subsidies without also working a minimum number of hours set by the state. A number of states do not consider postsecondary education an allowable activity for low-income parents to qualify for a child care subsidy.[43]

41 Matus-Grossman, L. & Gooden, G. (2002). *Opening Doors: Students' Perspectives on Juggling Work, Family, and College*. New York: MDRC. Retrieved March 22, 2014, from http://www. mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full_466.pdf

42 Nelson, B., Froehner, M., & Gault, B. (2013, March). College Students with Children are Common and Face Many Challenges in Completing Higher Education Summary. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved March 23, 2014, from http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/student-parent-success-initiative/resources-publications/#lates%20publications. Schumacher, R. (2013, July) *Prepping Colleges for Parents: Strategies for Supporting Student Parent Success in Postsecondary Education.*

43 Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved March 23, 2014, from http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/prepping-colleges-for-parents-strategies-for-supporting-student-parent-success-in-postsecondary-education
The Urban Institute, CCDF Policies Database (n.d.). CCDF Income Eligibility Thresholds and Family Copayment Amounts. Retrieved April 3, 2014, from http://www.urban.org/center/ibp/Projects/The-CCDF-Policies-Database.cfm?renderforprint=1

Examples

- *Federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS):* The CCAMPIS program provides federal funds to support or establish campus-based child care programs primarily serving the needs of low-income students. Grants may be used for before- and after-school services and to meet the child care needs of the community served by the institution, in addition to supporting care for the young children of enrolled students. Among the many institutions participating in this program are the *California State University* campuses in *Chico*, *Long Beach*, *Los Angeles*, *San Bernardino*, and *San Marcos*. Students at *Florida A&M University*, *Florida International University*, *Ferris State University*, *Wright State University*, and *East Central University* (Oklahoma) also benefit from CCAMPIS funding. The *University of Northern Florida* uses funding from a CCAMPIS grant to fund direct child care scholarships to eligible student parents. [44]

- The Undergraduate and Graduate Parent Support programs at the *University of Alabama* provide academic, social, and emotional support systems for student parents. They help student parents access campus and community resources, develop social networks of support and have a presence on campus. They maintain a website with links to a range of services and partner agencies and hold an interactive summer camp expo each spring. In addition to resource links, the website hosts forums that provide a centralized platform for students to communicate about various topics related to balancing academics and family. Partnerships with a local child care center and two housing complexes secure discounts for student parents using those services and have implemented a Sitters for Service program that provides student parents with 30 hours of free babysitting each semester.

- *The University of Michigan* provides child care subsidies through the financial aid office. The child care subsidy is a need-based program available for students who are attending school at least half-time to use for licensed child care for their dependent children under 13 or special-needs children under 19. In addition, the university offers tuition grants to qualifying students who place their children in on-campus centers.

- *Chadron State College* in Nebraska has a Child Development Center Laboratory that serves 47 children ages 2 through 9. The fact that the center serves as an experiential learning site for students from the Family and Consumer Sciences, Education, and Special Education programs likely provides a funding source.[45]

- At *California State University-Northridge*, the Family Child Care Home Education Network, sponsored jointly by the Associated Students and the Division of Student Affairs, serves low- to moderate-income student families whose needs cannot be met through the on-campus center. These needs may include evening and weekend care as well as support for children from ages 3 months to 12 years. Families accepted into the program choose one of the participating licensed family child care programs, and the

44 University of North Florida (n.d.). Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS) Grant. Retrieved March 27, 2014, from www.unf.edu/cdrc/CCAMPIS_Grant.aspx

45 Chadron State College (n.d.). Child Development Center Laboratory. Retrieved March 27, 2014, from www.csc.edu/appliedsciences/cdc/index.csc

network pays for most or all of the child care fees. To be eligible for the program, at least one parent must be enrolled at least half-time in a degree-seeking program; applicants must provide proof of income and demonstrate financial need.[46]

- Child care resource and referral services are part of Arizona State University's broader work/life program called ASU Family Resources. The program refers student, faculty, and staff parents to various child care options both on and off campus.[47]

Evidence

We do not know of any evidence about the impact of university assistance with child care on the success of college students.

IMPLEMENTING CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

Potential advantages

Students who are parents face both financial and logistical problems in balancing family and college responsibilities. Providing subsidized child care can address both of these issues. Even providing guidance and referrals can diminish the burden on student parents seeking quality affordable care for their children.

Potential disadvantages

Providing affordable child care may be quite expensive unless there is targeted funding. Students without children will, of course, get no benefit from these programs.

Legal or regulatory barriers

Institutions should be cautious about recommending child care providers about whom they do not have complete information. There are strict regulations applying to child care centers on campus or elsewhere.

Potential support and opposition

Student parents are an important and vulnerable population, and there is likely to be considerable support for assisting them. There may, however, be concerns about institutional involvement in an area outside its core function.

46 California State University Northridge (n.d.). Division of Student Affairs, Associated Students. Children's Center. Retrieved March 27, 2014, from http://www.csun.edu/as/childrens-center

47 Arizona State University (n.d.). ASU Family Resources. On Campus Programs. Retrieved March 27, 2014, from http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/reslife/family/oncampus.htm

Costs

The cost of helping students with their child care problems could range from very low for referral services to quite high for actually running subsidized child care centers. Some funding to support child care for students who are parents is available from the federal government. Other sources of funding on campus include subsidies from child development, education, and psychology programs and from student government associations, in addition to more general subsidies.[48]

Other implementation issues

Careful examination of the child care needs of the institutions' student body should precede any decisions about providing these services.

Scalability

Child care assistance is an appropriate strategy only for institutions that enroll large numbers of students who are parents. Building child care centers from scratch is a major undertaking. Institutions that can integrate these centers into early childhood education or psychology programs are most likely to find this route feasible in the current economic environment. However, less intensive efforts—and taking advantage of federal funding—should be a viable path for many institutions.

ACCESS TO INCOME SUPPORT BENEFITS

Living costs are the major financial barriers for most low-income students enrolled in public colleges and universities.[49] Grant programs for students will never be generous enough to cover these costs, and from a public policy perspective, it is unclear that it is feasible to provide much more generous subsidies for food and housing to students than are available to other low-income individuals. On average, dependent students from the lowest income quartile received grant aid that more than covered their tuition and fees at public two-year and four-year colleges in 2011-12, the latest year for which the data are available.[50] But like others with inadequate labor market earnings, they are likely to struggle with living costs.

Efforts are increasing to improve student access to state and federal income support programs to help them cover housing, food, child care, and other necessary expenses.

48 Examples of student government funding include SUNY-Stony Brook and the Community Colleges of Washington. Boressoff, T. (2012, March). *Varieties of Campus Child Care*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved November 19, 2013, from http://www.iwpr.org/publica- tions/pubs/tools-for-student-parent-success-varieties-of-campus-child-care

49 Non-tuition and fee expenses constitute about 80 percent of the total cost of attendance for community college students commuting to campus and about 60 percent for public four-year college students living on campus. (The College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2013*, Figure 2.)

50 Ibid, Figure 12.

Examples

- Single Stop USA is a nonprofit organization that is helping low-income people across the country gain access to multiple economic supports in partnership with local agencies, such as community colleges. In 2012, Single Stop USA helped almost 32,000 community college students access benefits and services—including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (DI), health insurance and child care assistance. The Single Stop model places a full-time site coordinator on campus with access to an online benefits network. Single Stop is currently working with community colleges in seven states (California, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York) and several multisite community college systems, such as the *City University of New York*, *Miami Dade College,* and the *City College of San Francisco*.[51]

- *Benefits Access for College Completion (BACC)* is an initiative funded by foundations and managed by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) with the goal of helping develop and integrate sustainable policies and practices that connect low-income students to an array of public benefits and community resources, such as food assistance, health care, and scholarship opportunities. An important component of the program is simply ensuring that students have the necessary information, using strategies such as building information about publicly available supports into financial aid conversations and meetings with college advisors. Institutions are partnering with state and county human services agencies to better serve students and are integrating existing online benefits screening tools into on-campus activities. In some cases, faculty members provide information in the classrooms about the services available on campus. Some schools have posted information in restrooms about how to find emergency food funding.[52]

Evidence

A preliminary study of the Single Stop efforts suggests that the combination of counseling and funding received by Single Stop participants has a measurable impact on student retention rates.[53]

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51 Single Stop USA (n.d.). Community Colleges. Retrieved March 22, 2014, from http://www.singlestopusa.org/program/community-colleges/

52 CLASP (n.d.) Benefits Access for College Completion. Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success. Retrieved February 12, 2014, from http://www.clasp.org/issues/postsecondary/pages/benefits-access-for-college-completion

53 Goldrick-Rab, S., Broton, K., & Gates, C. (2013, June 10). *Clearing the Path to a Brighter Future: Addressing Barriers to Community College Access and Success.* Association of Community College Trustees and Single Stop USA. Retrieved February 2, 2014, from http://kresge.org/sites/default/files/White-paper-barriers-to-community-college%20access-success.pdf.

IMPLEMENTING INCREASED ACCESS TO INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Potential advantages

While some federal and state income support programs are not available to students, or require students to work too many hours to be feasible, it makes sense for students to receive all of the subsidies for which they are eligible. Connecting students to public support programs can reduce their financial difficulties without imposing significant costs on the institution.

Potential disadvantages

Some institutions may find that few of their students are eligible for external funding.

Legal or regulatory barriers

These programs involve providing information and helping students to make connections and should not face legal or regulatory barriers.

Potential support and opposition

It is difficult to see why there would not be support for helping students to access funds to which they are entitled.

Costs

Providing this guidance for students requires that institutional staff members develop the relevant knowledge and have time to spend giving students personalized advice.

Other implementation issues

Institutions interested in connecting students to public benefits should consult with CLASP and the institutions involved in their initiative to learn about their experiences before setting up their own programs.

Scalability

The provision of this advice should not be difficult to implement and should be feasible on a wide variety of campuses serving low-income adults. Independent students, particularly those with children, are most likely to benefit.

CONCLUSION

Diminishing the financial barriers facing low-income students requires more than dollars, but innovative tuition and financial aid strategies may be constructive routes to improving the prospects of many at-risk students enrolled in comprehensive four-year public universities. The examples of tuition and financial aid policies cited in this paper should stimulate thought on the campuses in this sector about strategies for mitigating these barriers to student success. Even with constrained funding, it is possible to design policies that will improve the chances that students can meet their educational goals.

In considering and implementing policies, institutions should consider the demographics of their student bodies. Some of the programs that could be very important for older or part-time students might have less impact on younger or full-time students.

It is also important for institutional leaders to think carefully about who needs to be at the table to make decisions and how to garner the support of relevant constituencies. Careful consideration of both the funding needed to implement a successful program and the potential unintended consequences is vital. Reaching out to institutions that have successfully implemented similar policies and programs will increase the chances of designing and implementing strategies that really make a difference in the lives of students.

The shortage of rigorous evidence about the effectiveness of institutional efforts to support students is a real problem. We encourage any institution embarking on a new endeavor or modifying an existing program to design a careful study that will help to build the knowledge needed to improve student outcomes over the long run.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

STRATEGY	TYPES OF STUDENTS MOST LIKELY TO BE INFLUENCED BY POLICY	COST CONSIDERATIONS
	TUITION	
Block tuition	Full-time students enrolled for less than 15 credit hours per semester	Loss of tuition revenue for extra credit hours, savings from students graduating more quickly
Higher charges for surplus credits	Students taking longer to complete degrees because of random course taking	Added revenue from students accumulating excess credits
Flexible payment options	Students with short-term liquidity problems	Potential loss of interest income because of later payments; revenue gains from preventing students from dropping out because of liquidity problems
Fixed tuition for four years	Full-time student enrolling without breaks	Loss of ability to raise tuition for continuing students
Tuition refunds for on-time completion	Students on the margin of on-time completion	Risk of providing significant subsidies to students who would graduate on time without the extra incentive
	FINANCIAL AID	
Performance-based scholarships	Students who can accumulate more credits more rapidly with reasonable additional effort	Funds needed for aid to supplement federal and state need-based grants
Combining aid with support services	Students who need support and advice, not just money	Cost of support services; savings from increased student success
Emergency aid	Students facing unanticipated financial hardship	Cost of emergency grants or loans not repaid
Aid like a paycheck	Students with financial management difficulties	Administrative costs of multiple disbursements
Child care	Students who are parents	Low cost for providing advice and referrals; high cost for establishing on-campus care
Access to income support benefits	Adult students struggling to cover living expenses	Staffing costs for counseling services

APPENDIX B

CHARACTERISTICS OF 2011-12 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS, BY SECTOR

	ALL	PUBLIC TWO-YEAR	PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR NON-DOCTORAL	PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR DOCTORAL	PRIVATE FOUR-YEAR NON-DOCTORAL
DEPENDENCY STATUS					
Dependent	49%	41%	54%	70%	66%
Independent, no dependents	24%	27%	24%	18%	16%
Independent with dependents	28%	32%	22%	12%	19%
AGE AT FIRST ENROLLMENT					
18 or younger	42%	36%	45%	56%	50%
19 - 21	35%	37%	37%	35%	35%
22 - 24	7%	9%	7%	4%	4%
25 - 30	8%	8%	6%	3%	6%
Over 30	9%	10%	6%	2%	6%
DEPENDENT STUDENTS' PARENTAL INCOME					
Less than $30,000	25%	30%	27%	20%	19%
$30,000-64,999	24%	27%	24%	22%	22%
$65,000-105,999	25%	25%	26%	26%	27%
$106,000 or more	25%	18%	23%	32%	32%
*RISK FACTORS**					
None	26%	12%	27%	51%	49%
One	19%	19%	21%	21%	17%
Two	16%	19%	17%	11%	10%
Three	16%	19%	15%	8%	10%
Four	13%	16%	10%	6%	8%
Five or more	11%	15%	9%	3%	6%
RACE / ETHNICITY					
White	58%	56%	62%	63%	69%
Black or African American	16%	16%	13%	13%	14%
Hispanic or Latino	16%	19%	15%	13%	9%
Asian	6%	5%	5%	8%	4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%

	ALL	PUBLIC TWO-YEAR	PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR NON-DOCTORAL	PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR DOCTORAL	PRIVATE FOUR-YEAR NON-DOCTORAL
Native Hawaiian/ other Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
More than one race	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
EVER TAKEN REMEDIAL CLASSES					
No	69%	59%	65%	78%	77%
Yes	31%	41%	35%	22%	23%
ATTENDANCE INTENSITY					
Exclusively Full-time	51%	33%	48%	62%	70%
Exclusively Part-time	32%	50%	30%	15%	16%
Mixed	18%	18%	21%	23%	14%

*Risk factors include delayed college enrollment, no high school diploma, part-time enrollment, financial independence, having dependents, being a single parent, and working full-time while enrolled.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2012, Data Lab.

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