

Higher education reform



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Reforming Higher Education: Laying the Foundation US Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings recently said that, " There are far too many Americans who want to go to college but cannot-because they're either not prepared or cannot afford it" (cited in US Department of Education, 2006, p. 1). Years before the financing of a college education becomes an issue, the preparation for college needs to be taking place. Without a solid foundation, there will be no need for financial reform, as fewer and fewer students are ready to enter the rigors of academia. The numbers are dismal, with more than seventy five percent of our high school graduates ill prepared to start the first year of college (Arenson, 2007). For those that are lucky enough to enter college, many will be faced with poor academic skills, and hours of remedial courses just to catch up. In addition, preparation needs to include the cultural and social aspects, as well as the academic aspects of college. I propose reforming higher education to begin the college education in the 10th grade through a series of programs that prepares students both culturally and academically for a college education.

While a college education in the US costs twice as much as the same education costs in other industrialized nations, the US has fallen well behind these same nations in the rate of college attainment. Many students will drop out of high school, as they see no hope of ever realizing a higher degree. For the ones that do graduate, many will not have the cultural capital required to enroll in college. Students in high school have a significant need to be groomed for college admission. They may have a language deficit, poor study habits, or grades that do not meet the requirements for admission. Many of these students " are unlikely to have participated in campus visits, spoken with college representatives, leafed through college catalogs, or

participated in other activities that create college readiness" (Hagedorn and Fogel, 2002, p. 171). Increasing the US level of college attainment will require better preparation of our high school students.

The US Higher Education Act needs to have provisions that place college resources available to high schools. These resources could be used to hire mentors, sponsor college trips, and invite guest lecturers to aid in grooming high school students for college attendance. If a well-prepared high school student knows that will be able to succeed in education, and has the cultural awareness to select and apply for admission, the country's rates of college attainment will increase dramatically. In addition, high school courses need to be structured with college attendance as their goal. Courses need to be taught in the critical skills of reading, writing, and thinking. This will require a significant move away from the cookie cutter programs enacted by the No Child Left Behind Act, which will need to be repealed or amended to accommodate these reforms.

In conclusion, we should be using our high schools as a gateway to college, rather than the end of the academic line. Many students lack the cultural capital and social awareness that will be needed to pursue a college education. Bringing the colleges into the high schools will not only help the students get a head start, but also get them started in the right direction. Contact with college students, instructors, and administrators beginning in the 10th grade could build the necessary cultural capital and give all our students a foundation to build on, as they enter college fully prepared for the rigors of higher education.

References

<https://assignbuster.com/higher-education-refom/>

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