

# Free college tuition: a necessary and probable clause



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“Free” is not the same thing as “simple”(Michael Stone 7). In March 2015, the Federal Reserve calculated that in the United States, student debt rounded up to around 1.2 trillion dollars. In the 2015 Presidential Debates, these kinds of problems were ‘hot topics’, and Bernie Sanders proposed something blistering: free college education. Nowadays, Sanders proposition might have appeared unjustifiable to America, because even the neighborhood drunk knows that money doesn’t grow on trees. Yet, the figment of our imaginations was earnestly intrigued.

And so, the pot simmers down to one undeniable question, which is: ‘how many students are we talking about, and how are we going to pay for everything?’ (Michael Stone 7) A couple hundred years ago, there was a significantly lesser population than today. Naturally, less students attended university and even those were a select few: Caucasian (young) men from wealthy families.

But as populations have grown, and cultures have widely varied, there is an overwhelming amount of college students: girls, Hispanics, transgenders, Pacific Islander (the context of this list is to expand my point that college students vary far from wealthy Caucasian men). Additionally, many taxpayers might see “low-income black and Hispanic students who can’t afford to go to college as ‘the other’ and are thus less willing to pay higher taxes to support free tuition for the growing melting pot of students.”

(Michael Stone and Sandy Baum 7) “The reality is that when free college works — when the taxpayers are able and willing to pay for the full tuition for everyone — is when not too many people go to college,” Sandy Baum, an Urban Institute senior fellow and researcher of higher-education finance. The <https://assignbuster.com/free-college-tuition-a-necessary-and-probable-clause/>

unanimous conclusion is that a solution needs to be found for college debt and affordability, but that Senator Bernie Sanders' proposal isn't the only one. "Politicians, reformers, and others have proposed many remedies to this problem...public colleges tuition should be free..." Colleges are represented as a public good that drives economic status, however opponents to this idea argue that free colleges are not free because the cost is being transferred to taxpayers' wallet (Kirszner and Mandell 574). For example, Thelin (a University of Kentucky education professor and author of *A History of American Higher Education*) believes that America can offer more extensive loan forgiveness to those who are out in the bustling workforce after graduation (this boosts the economy). But Aptheker (a professor of feminist studies at University of California Santa Cruz) holds to her belief—no strings attached—that college finding is a necessary mandate especially because "the funding is already there. There's money. It's just a question of where you want to put it (Michael Stone and Aptheker 7)." In order to encourage economic growth and advancement in society, college tuition needs to be free for community colleges in America—across the board, no strings attached.

In *the Reality of Free Community College Tuition* by Fran Cubberley (2015), readers adopt a sense of hope for college students. Cubberley begins by briefly describing (past) President Obama's attempted plan to make two years at a community free, and she feels it would have a clear-cut impact in America. She contends that even though community college is more economical than other universities, community college is still, unfortunately, unattainable for many. She reiterates the one trillion-dollar student loan debt

and contorts how very off-putting higher education is to many as a result. “ While those of us in the field readily recognize the need for education beyond high school to make a life-sustaining wage, far too many students are choosing work over school (Fran Cubberley 21).” In an excerpt from, *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance*, Kiplinger dives in by contradicting that a proposed free tuition program for students attending community colleges in the U. S. isn’t, per-say, “ free.” “ It might not cost the students anything, but it wouldn’t be free to the taxpayers who would fund it (Kiplinger 18).” Now, he does emphasize that government propositions are done so on behalf of a benevolent society, and therefore, makes them ethical cases. “ An ethical case, however valid or lame, can be made for virtually every governmental expenditure (Kiplinger 18).” He rebates that an ethical case is a broad excuse, commonly and loosely used. Kiplinger then decides to focus on the cost-analysis of this program: if it is “ a cost-effective way to improve the capability of the American workforce, which is an important goal in a competitive global economy (Kiplinger 18).” Research shows that at a rate of sixty billion dollars over the course of ten years it might be, but it might not be. He makes it clear that the money wouldn’t be given from a federal hand out, and that the states could do it on their own terms. He throws in that the federal government’s Pell Grant program virtually makes community college free to the lower-class and could potentially stretch to the middle-class. “ Young Americans definitely need post-secondary training of some sort... to earn a decent living. Using taxpayer funds to help them do so would be money well spent. The challenge is figuring out how to do it most sensibly (Kiplinger 18).”

In Mishans' *Why students should pay the full costs of their Education* by]. Mishan– Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics– he explains how 'society', that is the community around us, would best suffice by which students who attend college pay for it themselves. "For if higher education is free, a man who chooses to spend three years at a university rather than enter the workforce may be willing to do so even though it makes no perceptible difference to his future earnings (Mishan 1)." Liz Westons' *Why your kid should help pay for College* narrates the madness of asking young adults to work their way through college. She emphasizes what is common knowledge: that those students are more likely to drop out. But, she counters that "setting limits and requiring a kid to pay at least part of the cost can actually lead to better grades while protecting parents' finances (Weston)." Universities can be \$70, 000 a year plus, while community colleges are much less, averaging \$5-10, 000 a year. Nonetheless, most parents aren't equipped for the apocalypse, saving only about \$18, 135, and 4 out of 10 parents aren't saving for college altogether. "Although the typical college graduate has a manageable level of education debt, it's easy to borrow far more than a student, or a parent, can comfortably repay (Weston)." Weston believes that students should help pay for college. She suggests using the Department of Education's FAFSA4caster, an online tool that predicts your "expected family contribution" based largely on parental income and assets. She asserts that although parents don't want their children suffering from student loans, but that the children are benefiting from a higher education and have many years in their future of paying debts. If parents can give financial support to their students in college and insist they get a job, this could be a solution. Though this seems to be a compelling

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argument, most families can't afford to put even one child through college and most kids are under stress of being a full-time student and don't have time for a part-time job on top of that.

In *The Case Against Free College* by Matt Bruenig, he expands on the word free. Loan debt has no doubt been the underlying complaint that has caused people to speak out for free college tuition. According to Bruenig, "free college" has many meanings: for some, it means "subsidizing tuition to zero," and for others, it means a combination of grants and money from Mom and Dad. He gloats that those advertising for free college believe in the 'benevolent society', however Bruenig believes those claims to be un-compelling. He states that the main problem with free college is that most students come from upper-class families with money. He adds that there are cases of students with high debt, but that all in all, if you attend college, you are going to have a higher wage salary than someone who didn't attend college. While Bruenig is true about that, there is still \$1.3 trillion dollars of loan debt floating over our economies head... causing a big, giant headache. As Aaron Bady in *Public Universities Should Be Free* argues, "a growing college-age population had to be matched by a growing system of accessible higher education, something that only the government can provide (Bady 4)." He justifies that by saying how education is needed for the greater good of our country, hence college was started in the first place.

In conclusion, the most plausible solution would be for all college to be free—the government can afford it for the greater good. The funds are present, but it's all about allocation; if the government can afford K-12 it can afford college. The future of our country is now; the generation receiving higher  
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education may be on the brink of the most heightening technological advancements yet to be seen by the world... isn't that worth funding? \$1.3 trillion dollars' worth of student loan debt doesn't sound heightening, in fact, it sounds like a major economical set back, one that could make or break the future of this country's' economy. The number of Americans with two- and four-year degrees has gone from 25% to 36%. " This reflects an American belief that education is key to socioeconomic mobility... and a workforce that will be competitive in the global marketplace (Kirszner and Mandell 574)."

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