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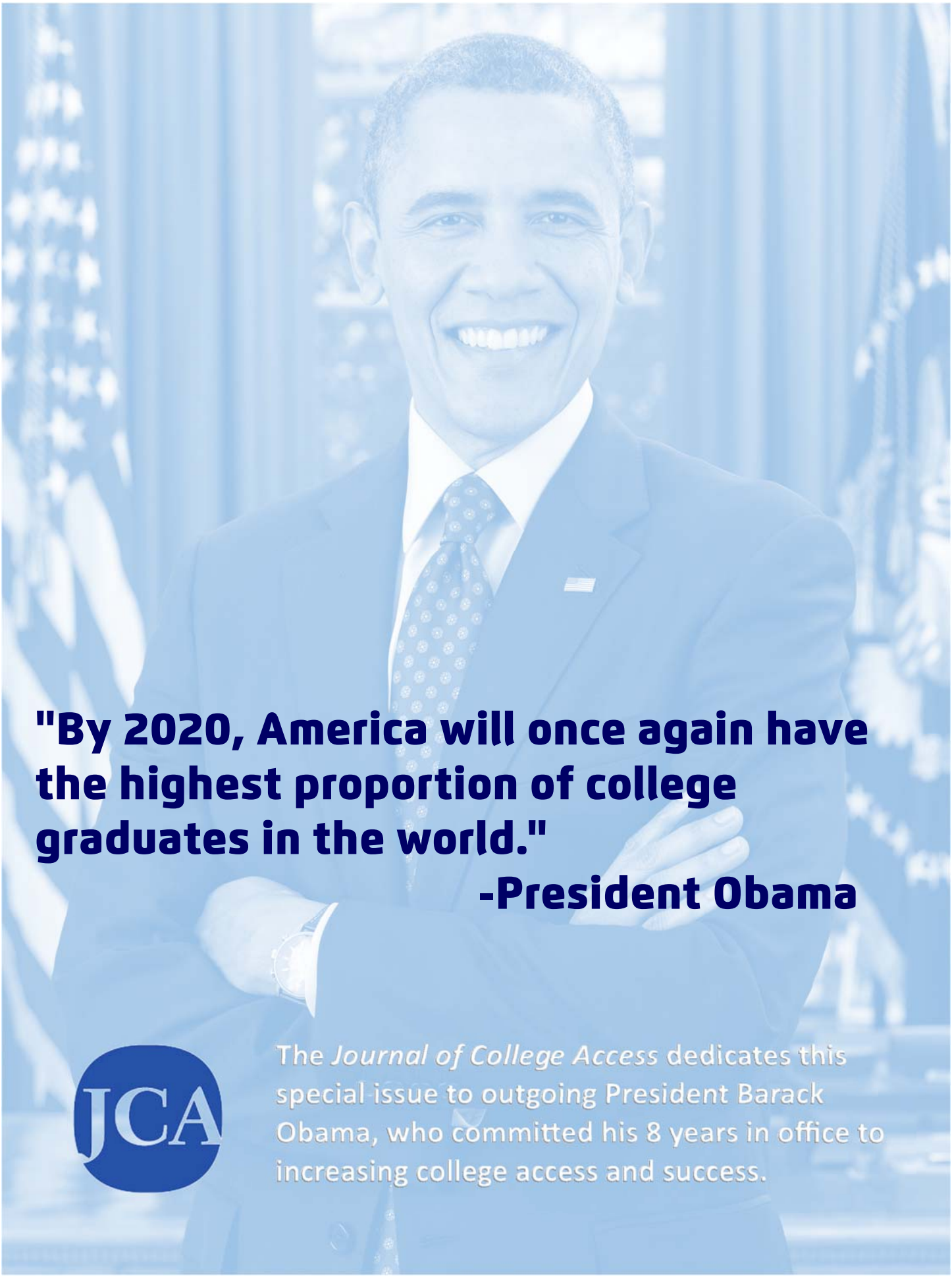

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About the Journal

An Overview

The *Journal of College Access* (JCA) focuses on the current trends, research, practices, and development of all types of programs, policies, and activities related to the access of and success in postsecondary education. Issues of college aspiration, qualification, application, enrollment, and persistence are the primary emphases.

The Journal was co-founded by Dr. Patrick O'Connor and Dr. Christopher Tremblay. O'Connor is Associate Dean for College Counseling at Kingswood Cranbrook School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and is a board member for the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN). Tremblay is Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management at the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

JCA is affiliated with the Michigan College Access Network, a statewide non-profit organization with a mission to increase college readiness, participation, and completion in Michigan, particularly among low-income students, first-generation college going students, and students of color.

Launched in March 2014, JCA is a part of Western Michigan University's ScholarWorks, a digital showcase of research, scholarly and creative output.

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Caroline Altman Smith

From the Editors

Authored by
Dr. Patrick O'Connor
Dr. Christopher W. Tremblay

Welcome to our third edition!

It's an exciting time to be working in the field of college access, for many reasons. Nearly ten years ago, the economic downturn led many to believe that a four year college degree was the only route to a secure future. Thanks to expanded research and advising programs, more Americans than ever before now know there are many paths to strong jobs and careers, with many—but not all— of those paths taking students to some kind of college experience. It could be a four-year degree, but it can also be a two-year degree, a certificate, or post-high school training that prepares students for a meaningful career in the skilled trades.

America's expanded view of what college means, and the idea that more Americans can take full advantage of one or more of those college options, has been greatly promoted by President Barak Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. Using their personal stories as the basis of the Reach Higher campaign, The First Family has increased awareness of college opportunities, and inspired Americans to explore those options, as no president has since the introduction of the GI bill.

As President Obama leaves office, we feature guest perspectives on the state of college access from those who helped shape it during his administration. These reflections are offered in the hope policymakers and college access champions will use them to advance efforts to increase awareness of college options, and to continue to expand the understanding of all the ways students can pursue "college."

Guest Perspective:
The White House

Authored by
Eric Waldo, The White House

College access and completion are at the core of President Obama's North Star goal. This goal was announced by the President in March of 2009 at the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, where he stated that by 2020, the United States would once again have the highest proportion of young people with a post-secondary degree. The President made this a goal of his administration because in today's global, knowledge-based economy, every student needs to pursue and complete some form of higher education in order to remain competitive in the workforce, whether that be a two or four year degree, community college, or an industry-recognized professional training program. To support her husband's North Star goal, First Lady Michelle Obama launched the Reach Higher Initiative in 2014 to commit to use her platform at the White House to meet that 2020 goal, especially for our must vulnerable students, like first generation college goers.

The First Lady believes that completing post-secondary education is the key to the future for Generation Z (students aged 14-19), and recent studies agree. Completing college is important because by 2020, 65 percent of all U.S. jobs will require postsecondary education/training after high school. Compared to a high school diploma, getting a degree from a two-year school—going to a community college and getting an associate's degree—could earn a graduate more than $300,000 over the course of their lifetime. And a four-year degree will earn a graduate a million dollars more than if he or she had merely a high school degree.

The First Lady, a first-generation college graduate herself, recognizes the impact higher education had on the trajectory of her life, which is why she has been fighting so hard to ensure that more young people are pursuing and completing a post-secondary degree. She has even become affectionately known within the counseling community as the nation's "school counselor in chief." This has meant focusing on four key areas to ensure that students understand what they need to complete their education: 1) Exposing students to college and career opportunities; 2) Understanding financial aid that can make college affordability a reality; 3) Encouraging academic planning and summer learning opportunities; and 4) Supporting school counselors who can help more students navigate the path to and through college.

One of the main strategies the First Lady has used to further these goals is using the

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convening authority of the White House to produce better outcomes for students. As part of the White House College Opportunity Days of Action on January 16, 2014 and December 4, 2014, the President and First Lady announced over 700 commitments to expand opportunity for more students to enroll and succeed in college from schools, nonprofits, foundations, businesses, and counselors. The hundreds of schools, organizations, and counselors have reported that within two years of making these commitments, they have already helped students access more than $5 billion in financial aid, enrolled 1 million more students in college, and set 10 million more students on track to complete on time within the decade. These commitments will resonate and expand educational opportunities for years to come.

In addition to public-private partnerships, the First Lady understands the importance of using her platform to change the cultural conversation around education. That is why she launched Better Make Room, a public awareness campaign that targets Generation Z, to encourage students to take charge of their future. This campaign utilizes new media to reach students where they are at, whether that be Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and now, texting. It has also meant creating a viral rap video with Saturday Night Live's Jay Pharaoh or hanging out with YouTube or Vine influencers to talk about why education matters. And then bringing that to the student level, the First Lady decided to elevate College Signing Day to the national stage as a way to recognize high school seniors making the commitment to go to college. When she first participated, there were a few dozen such events around the country, but thanks to the First Lady and her Reach Higher initiative, in just two years, there were over 1,200 College Signing Day celebrations happening in all fifty states, with celebrities, athletes, actors, musicians, and influencers of all kinds taking to social media to post pictures in their college gear to celebrate students and promote a college-going culture.

This past fall, Better Make Room launched Up Next, a mobile messaging tool that provides students and families across the country with free personalized support in searching for colleges, college applications, federal student aid, and student loan repayment. All students need to do to sign up for this free tool is text "COLLEGE" to 44044. This tool, which was developed based off of research done by University of Virginia professor Ben

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Castleman, aims to provide students with "nudges" to help guide them through the college application and financial aid processes, in addition to supporting students in their post-secondary education pursuits.

The First Lady made supporting school counselors one of the key pillars of Reach Higher because she knows the important role they play in student success. Reach Higher has tried to elevate and support the counseling profession by: bringing the Counselor of the Year ceremony to the White House for a yearly tradition; inviting foundations and thought leaders to improve research, preparation, and technology for counselors; and convening teams of educational leaders from nearly 40 states at national Counseling Summits to implement best practices around college and career-readiness for counselors and school districts.

In the past years we have seen the tremendous work that can happen when we bring together public and private partners from different communities across the country. In just three years Reach Higher has engaged thousands of school counselors, college access advisors, college access organizations, and made over 800 million impressions on social media, and the First Lady has helped ensure that more students understand the importance of filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), giving students access to over $180 billion available annually in federal financial aid and millions more in state, institutional, and private scholarships. And as of October 1, 2016, the Administration made the FAFSA application available three months early. Because of these efforts, countless students have been inspired to pursue a higher education that might not have otherwise.

The First Lady believes in the power and promise of every young person in America, and knows that the only way that America can continue to be the bulwark of freedom and opportunity in the world is by investing in our students. A great education makes you lucky, but you should not have to be lucky to get a great education.

If you would like to keep up with Reach Higher and Better Make Room, sign up for our newsletter at bettermakeroom.org.

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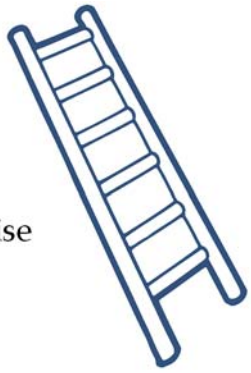
U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr.

I know you are all working hard to bring about the day when the quality of educational opportunities available to our children is not determined by their race or zip code, the language they speak at home or their family income, their immigration status, or whether they have a disability.



I also know that you believe, as I do, that education is a ladder. Rung by rung, it helps people reach places that would otherwise be an impossible climb.

When individuals have the chance to reach great heights, our society and way of life become stronger and better with every step they take.

So, today, I am here to ask you to act boldly on those beliefs. For all who believe that strong, equitable public education is central to a healthy democracy and a thriving economy, now is the moment for us to set aside the policy differences that we have let divide us, and move forward together courageously to defend and extend this fundamental American institution.

Speech Delivered on December 14, 2016
Reprinted with Permission

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

You've seen the powerful results that courage and hard work can deliver. I've seen them too, throughout my career as a public school educator. I've seen them in the District of Columbia and in the 31 states I have visited since coming to Washington.

And, as you may know, my life offers more proof.

New York City public school teachers quite literally saved my life. During the period when I lost both parents at an early age, they gave me a haven. They challenged me with high expectations and a rich, well-rounded curriculum; they provided me with hope in a time of despair; they helped me thrive and become the person I am today.

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So, my commitment to this work is personal. It's also rooted in my background as a high school social studies teacher and a student of history.

American history, like all human history, includes advances toward and retreats from our highest ideals.

The history of public education in America also is a stutter-step toward ambitiousness, inclusiveness, equity and excellence. But, make no mistake; education has always been central to our progress. Education gave Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton the tools and the vision to transform a colonial outpost into a great and powerful nation that inspires people across the globe. It allowed William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass to challenge the institution of slavery. Education inspired Susan B. Anthony to demand the right of women to help shape our democracy with their votes. And it was education that helped Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis find the words and the bravery to inspire a generation to march toward a brighter and more equal future.

But the work of "forming a more perfect union" continues, as it ever has and always must.

We must continue to press on, firm in the knowledge that when we pull others up, they do not pull us down. When the light of opportunity shines on those who lack it, it does not dim for those already in its glow.

The light of opportunity shines more brightly and more widely today than it did eight years ago. Thanks to the hard work of teachers and leaders, students and families, policymakers and advocates, the graduation rate is 83 percent, an all-time high, achievement gaps are closing particularly in Science and the most recent college graduating class was the largest and most diverse in our history.

But, for all our progress, more is required to meet the challenges our nation will face in the years to come.

Too many students still don't finish high school, and when they do, too many aren't ready for college. The relationship between poverty and educational achievement in the U.S. is among the strongest in the world.

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Ensuring more Americans get the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in our country matters more than ever.

As recently as the 1970s, people with only a high school education could qualify for nearly three-quarters of the nation's jobs. Today, that number is below 40 percent.

One recent analysis found that 95 percent of the jobs created since 2008 required some postsecondary education or training. Think about that. If you didn't finish high school—or even if you graduated—you can knock on 95 doors looking for a job before one opens. And everyone else without higher education will be trying to squeeze through those last five doors alongside you.

It is not enough for those already prosperous to prosper. Unless we are ensuring that all Americans can meaningfully participate in our nation's growth, our nation will not succeed. The simple fact, confirmed by the research, is that reducing income inequality positively influences economic output. When everyone has a fair chance, whole societies are healthier, better off and more productive.

I know some will argue that equity conflicts with liberty. But it's not liberty when the happenstance of birth binds a child to a life of limited possibilities. True liberty is the opportunity to take our lives as far as our drive and talent allow.

The pledge of allegiance, heard in American classrooms each day, affirms that in this republic, liberty and justice are the dual and enduring birthright, not of some, but of all. As long as that pledge stands, we can never separate the quest for liberty from the fight for social and economic justice.

When I talk about these lofty ideals, I think about students who made it as well as those who didn't.

I think all the time about Herman. Herman was a middle school student of mine at Roxbury Prep. He was doing well in high school and had a bright future ahead of him. But one day, mistaken for someone else, he was shot and killed by a young man in his neighborhood not much older than he was. At that moment, the potential of both young men was lost to their families and the world.

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Chances are that—like Herman—the young man who killed him was once a bubbly 5-year-old, waving his hand in the air, eager to be called on by his teacher. Herman had opportunities and support his killer did not. I find myself thinking about what happened to all that promise. What could society and our schools have done to offer help and hope, so he didn't wind up on the street corner, gun in hand, anger and hatred in his heart?

But I also think about Titciana.

Titciana was a quiet, shy sixth-grader. But her math teacher noticed how well she was doing. She encouraged Titciana to tutor her fellow students. School staff turned out to watch her play soccer and cheer her on. With the opportunities to lead and the recognition, Titciana thrived. She decided to become a teacher, graduated from Boston College, and returned to Roxbury Prep to teach math to others like her. She is now dean of students there.

So, what is it going to take to create an America where opportunity is plentiful and prosperity is widely shared, where we lose fewer Hermans and prepare more Titcianas?

You already know the key is education. And you know that making this vision a reality will take more hard work. But it is work we can do—together.

Today we have a choice to make. We can continue to argue amongst ourselves about our disagreements. Or we can work together in pursuit of larger goals. Now, I am not saying that we have to agree on every tactic or strategy. We won't. But I am saying that we can reject false dichotomies and disparaging rhetoric. We can stop questioning our allies' intentions and fight side by side for the belief that every student in America has the right to a great public education.

The passage of the new bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, marks a perfect time to set aside old debates and move forward together.

I think most of us can agree that the top down, one-size-fits-all approach of No Child Left Behind was a blunt tool, ill-suited to a nuanced task. ESSA, on the other hand, rightly empowers state and district leaders to develop strategies that address their unique challenges and needs. This exciting new flexibility could usher in a wave of innovation and improvement in education—and we should embrace it. But that doesn't mean

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every district should go it alone without guardrails for protecting students, guidelines for carrying it out, or the good ideas forged by peers through years of trial and toil.

Indeed, ESSA is fundamentally a civil rights law - an extension of the promise of educational equity made in the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. We, as leaders, can embrace the potential of this law and do the hard work to see that it is implemented in a way that delivers on that promise. Or, we as a field can fall back on what's easy—to cling to cynicism and take comfort in the status quo.

We also have a choice when it comes to high expectations for every student. I remember the pride I felt when, as a fifth grader at P.S. 276, my teacher Mr. Osterweil taught us how to read and understand Shakespeare. And I remember the bright spark in the eyes of a student I taught in Boston who wasn't always as motivated in school as he needed to be, but discovered his passion for social studies while writing a research paper on the Harlem Renaissance.

I also remember the pain and self-doubt I have heard from students I have met all over the country who went to college, only to discover they weren't yet ready to do the work there and had to take remedial courses.

Nearly every state in the country has established college- and career-ready standards. But we must fight the inevitable efforts to water down those expectations and undercut our efforts to improve education systems when the work gets hard. More importantly, we have to invest in schools and teachers so they can help students meet those standards.

And we must have the courage to hold ourselves accountable for their success. Without accountability, standards are meaningless and equity is a charade.

Often, when folks hear the word "accountability" in education, they think of tests and consequences. But our choice isn't between "test-and-punish" policies based on redundant or poor-quality assessments, or "wish-and-hope," with no tests and little insight into how, or whether, our children are learning. Those of us who have stood up for reasonable assessment have a responsibility to make sure tests are better, fairer, and fewer, as President Obama has called for. But we can

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do that while providing teachers and families with valuable information about how students are doing. And we can do it without overburdening students or crowding out instruction.

So let's agree there's a balance to be struck. Let's encourage states to use only the highest quality assessments: assessments that help students demonstrate what they are learning through critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, rather than rote memorization. And then let's recognize that meaningful accountability is about so much more than tests. Together, let's help states develop accountability systems that are rich and varied—that include measures such as chronic absenteeism, access to and success in advanced courses, or new approaches to discipline that help students improve their behavior and their academic achievement.

As we choose to strike a better balance on accountability and testing, let's also resist a false choice between allowing public charter schools and supporting traditional public schools. Our primary concern shouldn't be the management structure of schools; it should be whether they serve all students well.

Some of the best schools in places like Newark, Los Angeles and the Rio Grande Valley are public charter schools that are closing achievement gaps and preparing graduates who finish college. And as I saw last week in Boston, charters and district schools in many places are forming partnerships allowing them to learn from and be inspired by one another.

If we believe that public schools will always be the bedrock of American democracy and opportunity — and I do—we should welcome good public charter schools as laboratories for innovation that can benefit all of education. And supporters of public charter schools—myself included—must recognize the grave threat that ineffective ones pose to the entire sector. We must demand that charter authorizers set a high bar for granting a charter, rigorously monitor academic and operational performance, and close charter schools that fail their students. We must be equally rigorous in monitoring performance and working to turn around ineffective district schools. Supporting public charter schools and supporting district public schools means demanding quality for both.

Here's another false dichotomy: teachers are either exalted as the singular solution to all

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our education problems, or they are criticized for failing to solve them singlehandedly. We can make a better choice: we can recognize that teaching is an incredibly difficult job. Teachers make dozens of decisions every minute, hundreds during a school day and thousands every week. We can invest in teachers' preparation and development and welcome their expertise and leadership in issues that affect their students and classrooms each day.

Over the past two years, I've had countless conversations with teachers here in DC and across the country. To a person, they talk about becoming teachers to find the best in every child and help realize that potential. But I also hear their frustrations with the crush of paper work and the hours wasted in unhelpful in-service meetings or drive-by professional development sessions.

I hear about how they crave the insights of trusted colleagues who, having watched them work, can suggest a different way to ask a question or a project that they might have assigned instead of a worksheet. And I remember how hard it is to find time to hone your craft when you can't even carve out a minute to use the bathroom between classes.

Teachers need more resources and the higher pay they surely deserve, particularly those serving the highest need students. But we also need to make sure they have the space and opportunity - the clinically rich preparation, the collaboration time, the career ladders - to help them do what they joined the profession to do.

Quality. Accountability. Innovation. Effective teaching. These are among the most important issues we argue about in K-12 education policy today. But there are two more issues that we haven't always had the courage to address.

First, even successful strategies will fail without the funds to back them up — especially in the schools and neighborhoods where change is most needed. Money is never the only answer, but money does matter. It pays for higher salaries and for school counselors. Money builds science labs and repairs leaky roofs.

Yet, in districts all across the country, students who need the most still get the least. It's even worse when you look across district lines. Many children in Detroit or Chicago or

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Philadelphia can only dream of having the types of public schools that their peers a few miles away enjoy every day.

Federal dollars cannot begin to offset these inequalities. Yet, even a modest proposal to ensure that federal funds reach the students they are meant for has faced fierce opposition inside the beltway. But that's just the start of the conversation we need to be having about equitable access to resources.

It's not about one parent's child over another's, or one community's needs over another's. It's about choosing to invest in each other. Because we can't build fences high enough to divorce our own children's fate from that of children who live across town or across state lines. As a nation, we share one destiny.

That brings me to one more choice: between inclusion and segregation. This is among the most charged topics in education—and one we must confront. Our nation and our world are growing more diverse and interconnected. We need to recognize the multicultural makeup of our country as an asset, not a liability. This means we need schools that embrace diversity. Diverse schools are great preparation for all students. They help more children succeed, help broaden students' perspectives, and help prepare them to participate in a global workforce. And I am convinced that the growing conflicts in this country over race and religion and language would be profoundly reduced if our children were able to learn and play alongside classmates who were different from themselves and if they regularly encountered teachers and leaders of color in their schools.

Now, given the pitched battles of recent years' in K-12, the goals of increasing access to preschool and college completion might seem tame by comparison. But here, too, we have hard work to do and hard choices to make.

There is a growing bipartisan consensus toward increased access to preschool—as well there should be. But our choices don't end there, because access alone is not enough. The harder work before us is to ensure consistent quality for all students—because access to low-quality programs is no access at all.

We've seen similar momentum toward access to free community college and mitigating student debt to put a college degree or career credential within reach for every student. We must continue to invest in making college

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more accessible and affordable. And that starts by refusing to turn back the clock to a time when tens of billions of dollars intended to help students went instead to wasteful subsidies for big banks.

But we do students—and the nation—a disservice if we focus on access and affordability without also supporting completion.

Across the country, some schools—from the City University of New York' ASAP program to Georgia State to Arizona State University—are doing whatever it takes to help more students of every background enroll in college, stay on course, and earn their degrees by providing personalized, ongoing support and advising. We need to push more college, system, and state leaders to step up and adopt such evidence-based practices.

But there are also schools that deceive students, derail their dreams, and defraud families and taxpayers. There's no place for those schools in America.

We have cracked down on these predatory institutions, and that work, too, must continue. Because the most expensive degree is still the one that you never complete; or the one not worth the paper it's written on.

None of the challenges I've mentioned today are easy, but here's the thing: solving them is not a mystery. The answers are out there. As Amanda Ripley recently wrote, in reflecting on the recent PISA results—and I quote—"The smartest countries tend to be those that have acted to make teaching more prestigious and selective; directed more resources to their neediest children; enrolled most children in high-quality preschools; helped schools establish cultures of constant improvement; and applied rigorous, consistent standards across all classrooms."

But we don't need to look to practices of international competitors for all the answers. We have them close to home as well. That is why this Administration has invested in I3 (the Investing in Innovation program) and in the Institute for Education Sciences to gather evidence of what is working—evidence that meets the rigorous standards taken for granted in medicine and science.

While we need to continue to encourage innovation and use what we learn to keep

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improving, we don't have to wait for some brilliant scientific or technological discovery. Instead we need to act on evidence and act boldly, urgently, and courageously.

And that means being united. From teachers in the classrooms to business leaders and elected officials to union leaders, from parents in Tulsa to community activists in Baltimore, we must all be a part of the solution. We may disagree about tactics and strategies, but, as advocates of public education, we cannot afford to disagree about the need to make choices that reflect the best interests of students, and to push ahead bravely.

Because for our children, it's literally a matter of life and death.

It was for me. It was for Herman, whose life was taken in the street by a young man who had been failed by his schools and society. And it is for Titciana's students today as she now helps students in her neighborhood, the same way she was helped.

I am sure all of you who have worked in schools have stories similar to those of Herman and Titciana. Let them inspire you to always make the choices that will help more young people know the success of a Titciana and fewer suffer the fate of a Herman.

We can fight small battles tenaciously and default to easy solutions. Or, we can summon the will to work together on the big issues and be rewarded with an even greater, fairer, more prosperous nation to pass on to future generations.

When President Obama visited Selma and the Edmund Pettus Bridge to commemorate the 50th anniversary of that turning point in the fight for civil rights, he asked, "What greater form of patriotism is there than the belief that America is not yet finished, that we are strong enough to be self-critical, that each successive generation can look upon our imperfections and decide that it is in our power to remake this nation to more closely align with our highest ideals?"

I don't know yet what I am going to do when I leave the Administration. But I can tell you that, whatever it is, I will choose to be the kind of patriot the President described.

I ask all of you to join me.

Guest Perspective:
The Kresge Foundation

Authored by
Caroline Altman Smith, Deputy Director, Education

In 2010, after eight decades of making capital challenge grants, The Kresge Foundation changed directions and became a strategic grantmaker with six distinct program areas, including an Education Program. Motivated by the fact that a college degree is the closest thing there is to a silver bullet for alleviating poverty, Kresge decided to focus its education work on helping more low-income students and students of color enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Data (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998) show college graduates earn more, vote more, volunteer more, live longer and healthier lives, and have kids who are more likely to go to college. As we scanned the college access and success field, we realized many students weren't getting the support they needed to navigate the byzantine college access process. So we identified dozens of organizations across the country helping young people transition from high school to college, and doing so with creativity, passion and resourcefulness – these became some of our Education Program's first partners. We believed that providing support to these organizations to expand their operations and serve more students would be a meaningful contribution to the field.

It was certainly meaningful to the students we reached. But while Kresge funding benefited thousands of students who otherwise might not have received such college access support, before long, we began to suspect we were impacting only the lucky few.

It was a wake-up call when an internal 2015 Monitor Deloitte analysis showed that the leading 19 college access organizations, many of which receive Kresge support, were still serving only 7 percent of the young people that could benefit from their services. After years of raising awareness, after countless careers spent devoted to the cause, after all the public and private money invested, the bottom line was that effective organizations were not scaling at a rate sufficient to meet the need.

Our attention turned to helping some of our highest performing partner organizations scale their efforts. There is, of course, nothing wrong with being a well-run, high-quality, small-scale college access organization. But for those with aspirations for greater levels of impact, there are a number of interesting examples of organizations that made an intentional decision to grow and forged new partnerships designed with scaling in mind.

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Many started out providing college access services in a particular city, where they helped local kids get into college, raised funds, built partnerships, and increased the number of schools and students served. As they began to think about how to reach larger numbers of students by entering new markets, many maintained fidelity to their original model but made important adaptations suited to best fit the context of new places, to reflect new insights into their strengths, or to partner up with likeminded organizations that could improve impact and further reach. Several Kresge-supported examples include:

uAspire, a well-regarded provider of financial aid and affordability services, began its work in Boston before expanding to several other cities. Faced with the logistical challenges of operating services in several far-flung places, the team at uAspire realized the organization would never grow quickly or sustainably enough to meet its ambitious desire to serve many thousands more students. After some soul-searching about its comparative advantage in the college access field, the organization's leadership determined that uAspire was uniquely well-positioned to train *other* college access providers on critical elements of the not-sexy-but-critical financial aid process, including FAFSA submission and interpreting award letters. The newly-developed Training and Technical Assistance Program created a platform for uAspire to provide frontline staff of schools, community-based organizations and charter-management organizations with the knowledge and tools needed to advise students on affordability, which for most students is the primary barrier to access. This frontline staff training approach means that exponentially more students will benefit from uAspire's technical expertise. To learn more about uAspire, visit uaspire.org.

New York City-based iMentor matches every student in its partner low-income high schools with a college-educated volunteer mentor. Through a hybrid online and in-person approach, the pair work through a research-based curriculum designed to help the student navigate successfully to and through college. iMentor partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) affiliates to run the program in 17 cities. This partnership was a win-win for the two organizations. BBBS needed a hook to keep teenaged youth engaged in its mentoring program, and its approach lacked a concerted focus on college access. iMentor benefited from BBBS' strong brand and significant national scale. Through this partnership,

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BBBS agencies implemented the iMentor model in their local communities, utilizing iMentor's online platform, curriculum, and best practices. By identifying a strategic partner with a much larger footprint and making creative use of a strong online platform, iMentor's program now reaches large numbers of students in new markets. To learn more about iMentor, visit imentor.org.

College Forward, a Texas -based organization that started out providing only access services, was frustrated that so many of the high school students it advised would end up dropping out of college. The organization launched the "Success Partnerships" program to market its advising services to higher education institutions for a fee. College Forward preserves the return on investment of the students it helped get into college and enjoys a new revenue stream, the college sees improved retention rates and higher tuition revenues, and most importantly, the student is more likely to stay enrolled and complete a degree. College Forward's goal is to permanently embed the intensive coaching model within the institution over the course of a three-year contract. To learn more about College Forward, visit collegeforward.org.

Improved scaling alone will not solve the college access challenge. We also need investments in areas like research to demonstrate what approaches are most effective in fostering student success, and strong policy and advocacy efforts to expand government funding of equitable financial aid programs and efforts to strengthen the capacity of institutions that serve large numbers of low-income and students of color. One piece of this puzzle that we are working more purposefully on is improving alignment between the types of institutions and systems that serve the students we care about most. Given the Foundation's overall mission of expanding opportunities for low-income people in cities, we are increasingly focusing on college access and success in urban areas. We use the concept of an "urban higher education ecosystem" as a frame for exploring ways to improve linkages between various interconnected institutions that put student needs at the center. We encourage college access organizations to participate in more cross-sector and networked partnerships to better coordinate institutions and systems that affect a student's ability to enter and succeed in college. These types of efforts will help address a number of disconnects that are serious barriers to progress: between college access and success organizations; between school districts and outside providers of college access services; between key parts of

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the education pipeline, including K-12 and higher education; and between key stakeholders in cities that all have a role to play to improve college access and attainment.

In the past decade, the discourse on college attainment has swung from a focus on access to a focus on attainment, which was an overdue acknowledgement of the fact that access is only half the battle. It is true that if we just did a better job graduating the students that already make it into college, we could significantly improve the nation's college attainment level. However, we cannot neglect the college access pipeline, and Kresge is committed to maintaining a prominent focus on college access in our work. Low-income and first-generation students still need well-trained guidance counselors, still need help filling out the FAFSA, still need college and career advice and mentors and the chance to go on college tours. We need a both/and strategy where the pipeline remains strong; we work creatively to scale approaches that are working so that even more students can help achieve their dreams of going to college; *and* we do a better job of serving students once they matriculate into college so they can earn life-changing degrees.

REFERENCE

Institute for Higher Education Policy (April 9, 1998). *Reaping The Benefits: Defining the Public and Private Value of Going to College*. Retrieved from ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/reapingthebenefits.pdf

ABOUT THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

The Kresge Foundation is a $3.6 billion private, national foundation that works to expand opportunities in America's cities through grantmaking and social investing in arts and culture, education, environment, health, human services and community development in Detroit.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

We promote postsecondary access and success for low-income, first-generation and underrepresented students living in cities in the United States and South Africa.