



Financial Strains Keep Millions Out of College, Panel Says. Jane R. Porter. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 53.5 (Sept 22, 2006)(334 words) From *General Reference Center Gold*.

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Millions of high-school graduates from low- and moderate-income families who planned and prepared for college will continue to lose access to higher education because of financial strains, according to a report released last week by a committee that advises Congress and the U.S. Education Department.

The report, "Mortgaging Our Future: How Financial Barriers to College Undercut America's Global Competitiveness," was released by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance and is based on analyses of data collected by the Education Department, primarily through the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002, and the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey.

It follows two previous reports issued by the committee -- "Access Denied," in 2001, and "Empty Promises," in 2002 -- that focused on rising college costs and insufficient financial aid as a barrier to college attendance. The new report focuses on how those factors undercut bachelor's-degree attainment.

The report warns that financial barriers are disrupting other efforts to increase college enrollment, such as improved academic preparation, expanded early intervention, increased outreach to students, and simplified student-aid forms and processes.

According to the report, lowering financial barriers is necessary to increase the number of students from low- and moderate-income families who earn bachelor's degrees.

According to the report, 1.4 million to 2.4 million bachelor's degrees will be lost this decade as financial concerns prevent academically qualified students from the lowest income bracket from attending college.

The report stresses that those figures are conservative estimates because the analyses took into account only high-school graduates who were academically prepared for college, as defined by the level of mathematics they had studied. It further divided those students into two groups: those who took at least Algebra II, and those who took at least trigonometry.

Taking trigonometry is the more rigorous of those standards, the report says, and accounts for the lower end of the range of estimated degree losses because far fewer high-school graduates are identified as college-qualified under that standard."

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