



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



CONDITION OF ACCESS & PERSISTENCE STUDY

In 2006, the Advisory Committee delivered a report to Congress and the Secretary of Education entitled, *Mortgaging Our Future*, that described how financial barriers to college undercut America's global competitiveness. Specifically, the report examined the impact of finances on college-qualified low- and moderate-income high school graduates and addressed three central questions:

- What prices net of grant aid from all sources face these students at public colleges?
- How do these net prices appear to affect their first-time enrollment by type of college?
- What appear to be the longer-term effects on their persistence and degree completion?

To answer these questions, the report utilized the most recent nationally representative, longitudinal and cross-sectional, student-level data on college costs, financial aid, and rates of enrollment, persistence, and degree completion. The data included both students who enrolled in college and those who did not.

The report found that record high prices net of grant aid at four-year public colleges appeared to have a significant adverse effect on the enrollment and persistence of college-qualified low- and moderate-income high school graduates. The report projected that as many as **2.4 million** bachelor's degrees would likely be lost this decade, as the number of high school graduates increases and academic preparation improves. An update released in May 2008, noting a significant enrollment shift from four-year to two-year public colleges between 1992 and 2004, revised the estimate upward to **3.2 million**.

The *Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008* reauthorizes the Advisory Committee through 2014 and directs it to continue to monitor net prices and their effects. Specifically, the legislation requires an annual report to the authorizing committees containing analyses and policy recommendations regarding the adequacy of need-based grant aid and the postsecondary enrollment and graduation rates of low- and moderate-income students.

The Committee's approach to fulfilling this charge will entail:

- Monitoring federal, state, and institutional databases, including current aid packaging.
- Reviewing research efforts on the adequacy of grant aid, enrollment, and persistence.
- Analyzing the most recent data for major trends in college enrollment and persistence.
- Developing recommendations to advance access and persistence across institutions.

Each annual report, from 2009 through 2014, will provide Congress with an up-to-date snapshot that utilizes the most recent data and analyses available on the condition of access and persistence.