



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



STUDY OF INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS TO BACCALAUREATE DEGREE ATTAINMENT

The Advisory Committee's three-year initiative, *Innovative Pathways to Baccalaureate Degree Attainment*, examines alternative programs and strategies designed to increase the number of low- and moderate-income students and nontraditional students who earn a bachelor's degree. Thus far, the Committee has delivered three reports:

Transition Matters: Community College to Bachelor's Degree

Released in May 2008, this report was based on data from the Committee's 2006 report, *Mortgaging Our Future*, data indicating that large numbers of college-qualified low-income students are not enrolling and persisting in college. Many students whose ultimate goal is a bachelor's degree may choose first to attend a public two-year college for several reasons, including lower cost of attendance. The report identifies and analyzes three critical transition points—enrollment, persistence, and transfer—for such students, as well as five categories of barriers—academic, social, informational, complexity, and financial—that prevent students, at each transition point, from attaining a degree.

Early & Often: Designing a Comprehensive System of Financial Aid Information

Released in July 2008, the purpose of the study was to identify a framework and guidelines for the delivery of comprehensive, integrated financial aid information to middle and high school students, an approach identified in the Committee's 2005 report, *The Student Aid Gauntlet*. The comprehensive framework provides detailed subcategories of information that students should know within four broad areas: the benefits of higher education, college expenses, paying for college, and forms and processes. In addition, the report establishes a set of ten guidelines to help early intervention practitioners tailor delivery to target populations. Finally, the report suggests a series of unit plans that organizations might use to ensure timely information delivery.

Apply to Succeed: Ensuring Community College Students Benefit from Need-Based Financial Aid

Released in September 2008, the purpose of this study was to determine steps that need to be taken by higher education stakeholders to ensure that the pathway from community college to four-year college through bachelor's degree completion remains viable for low- and moderate-income students who have that aspiration. Two main findings emerge: one, that millions of community college students who appear to be eligible for need-based aid are failing to apply. Two, the *College Cost Reduction and Access Act* (CCRAA) increases the eligibility of many students; however, neither the benefits of CCRAA, nor its implementation are fully understood. To address these concerns, the report recommends ways to increase the number of community college students applying for financial aid, and the rate at which they apply.

An interim report on the Innovative Pathways initiative is due to Congress and the Secretary of Education in 2009; the final report is due in 2011.

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An independent committee created by Congress to advise on higher education and student aid policy