

### Who Should Pay for Higher Education?

In December 2007, the recession slowly hit the United States, but it wasn't until 2009 when Americans realized what was actually happening. Money has become an issue since then, making California cut budget on higher education. Colleges has been increasing tuition dramatically, thereby making it harder for students to attend. This issue is giving students' second thoughts about going to college and questioning who should be paying for their education with everyone struggling financially. While some people believe that it should be both the government and individual responsibility, I believe the government should take care of this problem during an economic crisis. Students that attend college are already affected by the increase in tuition and the recession, while having other necessities to pay.

The rise in college tuition has impacted many college students and the increased tuition has made it harder for students to obtain a higher education. As the price of higher education becomes an issue for students, Jessika Jones, a Staff Directory of the Policy and Research in California, comment on how college increased in cost will not give students a chance to get an education. She says, "Affordability of higher education was a problem even before the state's current budget crisis. But with recent budget cuts, the situation is worsening. Students and their families are taking on higher debt, and costs may deter students from attending college" (1). While Jones recognizes the price for college was an issue before the budget crisis, she is concerned for families and students that cannot afford college. Students now have a higher payment for college and this could decrease attendance. Between the years of 2009 to 2010, tuition for Universities in California increased by 21 percent while California State Universities

increased by 8 percent (Jones 2). Since tuition has been increasing rapidly, Amy Leisenring, a Sociology Assistant Professor at San Jose State University, takes a closer look at the issue and note the negative effects of it. Leisenring survey students and received responses with results that more than nine-tenths of students have been negatively affected by the increase in fees. Forty-four percent of students have trouble paying for college, thirty percent have thought about dropping out, and forty-nine have responded that their families are having trouble financially (qtd. in University of California). This shows that increasing fees and tuition on students are putting them at a risk to think negatively when attending college. Leisenring is trying to point out why it is not a good idea to increased fees but at the same time want colleges to understand the effects on students. Contrary, others will say enough fund has been distributed to colleges and students should be paying for their own education. While I do understand, I believe with the economic crisis it is better to have the government fund for higher education. Right now, everyone is struggling to use money wisely and rightfully. Kirstin Olsen, a conservative and California Assembly Member, believes that it is shameful in the decline of government funding. Olsen defends and says, "The fact that they keep taking dollars away from higher education, I believe is unfortunate. I believe it's unnecessary. The cut should be made in other areas because we need to focus on providing access and opportunities to students." This is a reasonable claim why the government should fund students in college even with the budget cut. Students go to college in hopes of graduating and knowing their hard work has paid off so when they leave college, there will be many opportunities waiting for them.

Since the recession though, families are having difficult times providing money for their children to attend college. This has mostly affected low-income and middle-income families and students because of the college cost. Jessika Jones proposes that:

Rising costs are only part of the affordability problem for low-income and middle-income families. With rising costs, and flat or falling incomes, supporting a student is taking an increasing percentage of incomes. Middle and lower-middle-income families saw their incomes fall 2–3% between 2001 and 2009 when adjusted for inflation and low-income families saw an income drop of 6.5%. (3)

Meanwhile students are still planning to attend college and pay the price they realized they can't pay it themselves. Even with the income dropping, many families are still trying to help aid their children through college. This tells how dedicated students are, even in the worst time, to still want to attend college. Leisenring has a story from a student who is experiencing a family with recession and college increased fees:

My dad pays for my school but because it's been so expensive lately and the economy has been so bad, he's been charging my tuition on his credit card. [Before] the fee increase if I needed anything, I could go and ask him for a little bit of extra like \$50 or \$100. And now because it's so tight the \$400 is just more than my family can already afford. He used to help me out at the beginning of the semester with books and stuff and now he doesn't any more. (qtd. in University of California)

Leisenring shows how parents used to help their children pay for college but with the recession and budget cut happening things have changed. The recession has affected not only families but students also that are trying to attend college. While other people will say that there are scholarships and financial aid to help students through college and if a student doesn't apply then it's their fault. I do agree with this statement but not every student qualifies for those awards. Getting financial aid is a complex process and it takes time. Even though some students do not apply for financial aid, those that do either do not qualify or do not receive it in time. These

outcomes can cause a student to lost hope and feel hopeless about attending college (Hopes & Hurdles 8). Qualifying for financial aid is such a long process because it includes the student parent incomes, the number of siblings in college, and the student grade point average.

While college students will try to do everything they can to pay for college, some will say tuition and fees is all they have to worry about. Leisenring argues how there are “‘Other’ responses given by students as to how fee increases have negatively impacted included: having trouble paying cost of living expenses, having to take out additional loans, being unable to buy books for school, and being unable to save for graduate school” (qtd. in University of California). At the end of a decision, college students comprehend that there is more than just college tuition and fees to pay. There comes more than a price for college tuition and it is arduous for students to attend college without being disturbed by the price. Even with the increased of cost in college, students are trying to find different ways to pay their way to get a college education. They understand that they will have to do more than depend on grants and financial aid to get them through college. I go to school everyday with my older sister and we spend about 500 to 600 dollars a month. Even though we get financial aid and it covers our tuition, we use the left over tuition to pay for books, food, and gas. Since we commute to and from school 40 minutes each day, sometimes it is barely enough for a whole week. I also have a job but I only work on the weekends because I am scare of failing in college as a freshman. Gary Orfield, a Professor at UCLA Graduate School of Education and Co-Director of The Civil Rights Project at UCLA, realizes that with the increased in college students are working more than they should. He says, “We see, however, that many students are far beyond this point and a significant number are trying to both work full-time and study full-time, something that puts unreasonable pressure on students and seriously cuts deeply into the value of college education

and a student's chance of success" (qtd. in University of California). Any student taking on both work and school will now show a good outcome on college because it affects them trying to get a college education. Orfield worries about students not getting the right amount of balance with work and school with the increased in college costs.

Even though students still plan on going to college, they will be affected by the increase in tuition, the recession, and having other necessities to pay while attending college. Students now have to depend more on themselves to pay for college. I still believe the government should provide financial aid for all types of college students because of the economic crisis. Even for some high income students because some of those student's parents make money just between the middle and high income line. With the recession and cost of college increasing yearly, incoming and current college students will need funding by the government to attend college. The government can help fund higher education by not cutting the budget for colleges because every year students around the world apply to colleges. This shows how motivated students are to still want to get a college education to better their lives and obtain a well career after college.

Works Cited

Adam, Michelle. "Re-Claiming an Old Social Contract: "College for Low-Income Students."

*Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review* 72.7 (2007): 60-66.

ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 26 Oct. 2011.

Cochrane, Deborah Frankle, and Laura Szabo-Kubitz. "Hopes & Hurdles: California Foster

Youth And College Financial Aid." *Institute For College Access & Success* (2009):

ERIC. Web. 3 Nov. 2011.

Jones, Jessika, and Commission California Postsecondary Education. "College Costs and Family

Income: The Affordability Issue at UC and CSU. Report 11-02." *California*

*Postsecondary Education Commission* (2011): ERIC.EBSCO. Web. 25 Oct. 2011.

Olsen, Kristin. "Perspectives in Higher Education." California State University of Stanislaus.

Mary Stuart Rogers Room 130, One University Circle, Turlock, CA. 25 October 2011.

n.p.

University of California, Los Angeles, Civil Rights Project / Proyecto Derechos Civiles.

"Financing College in Hard Times: Work and Student Aid. The CSU Crisis and

California's Future." *Civil Rights Project / Proyecto Derechos Civiles* (2011): ERIC.

EBSCO. Web. 25 Oct. 2011.