

We are at a time of great economic and social change, where the quality of education provided to all of our people is more important than ever. We have moved from a land-based economy, to an industry-based economy, to a knowledge-based economy with dramatic implications both for how we sustain economic growth and for the tools we need to provide all of our people to succeed and prosper in this new era.

In this new era, knowledge has become our greatest strategic resource and learning our greatest strategic skill. Earlier ^{this} century, many of our people could get a good job, raise a family, and live a productive ~~family~~ ^{life} without having completed high school, or even elementary school. This is simply no longer true. ^{Now more than ever} For all of our people, the key to unlocking the American Dream is a ^{high-} quality education and ^{more} higher levels of education and training than ever before. Our nation's time-honored commitment to public education must be strengthened to provide free, ^{high-} quality public education to all of our people.

Now, we are at a time of great debate about the future of public education in this nation, at a time when our public schools appear to be falling short of the obligation that falls on them in today's economy.

Federal?
give up the system
Some defend the status quo, saying that our schools are doing well enough given the challenges facing our children, families, and society today, and that our schools are doing as well as ever. They say only that more ^{more} funding is needed to help ^{what's} improve our schools cope with these challenges a little better, and that the best ^{best} national role is to invest additional funding into the current system. Others say that our public school systems have failed, ^{They attach} ~~that~~ many of the people and organizations trying to help our public schools succeed, and they advocate strategies like ^{selected} diverting public taxpayer dollars to support private school tuition to help a few children escape a failed public school system. They say the ^{no} national government should play no significant role in improving our schools.

I think both sides are missing the point. Our nation must ensure that all of our people get better and higher levels of education than ever before. To those comfortable with the status quo, I say that the status quo is ^{not} ~~no longer~~ nearly good enough. Yes, our test scores are about where they were many years ago, and even up slightly in some areas. But this leaves far too many of our young people without the tools needed to achieve the American Dream, and we cannot accept this situation simply because ^{we are unwilling to invest the time and energy} ~~the current arrangement of our schools was good enough years ago.~~ Moreover, while there are examples of wonderful, successful public schools in every city in this country, too many of our public school systems serving our poorest children are simply not providing the quality education they need to succeed. If we are to honor our commitment to provide the American Dream to all of our people, if we are going to sustain our economic growth and enable all of our people to benefit from this growth, we simply must do much better. *it will take to turn our schools around.*

To all of those willing to increase spending on an unchanged public school system, I say: we cannot give up on the promise of public education in American by stubbornly sticking to the status quo.

To those who bash our public schools...who say public education has failed...who say we can demand change in our schools without additional investments...who say we should divert public taxpayer dollars to private school tuition, I say we cannot give up on the promise of public education by shirking the hard work of improving -- rather than abandoning -- the public schools that are the bulwark of our democracy and economy.

The value
of
PE in
America's
history &
culture -
democracy,
etc.

To both sides I say: ~~Our economic growth cannot continue, and we can not provide all of our people with the tools to benefit from America's prosperity, unless~~ ^{we must} We insist on dramatic improvements, and bold changes, in our schools. And across this great nation, there are promising efforts to make these changes and investments. We need to build on these efforts in order to ensure all of our children benefit from Americans working together across party, ^{political or} socio-economic, and racial lines to give them the education they need and deserve. ^(partisan)

* Kids often grow up with more complicated needs, many with less connections to their families and communities, violence in media, etc...

? We also have a moral obligation to raise our kids well, help them become good citizens, etc....

And we have a special obligation to help provide a quality education to our children in greatest need...

^{we} We also have learned an enormous amount about what it takes to educate our young people, with important research on the brain, documentation of profound impact on children of quality pre-school, good teaching, smaller classes, more individualized attention, high expectations, etc...

[We need to help all of our people get the new basics -- the old basics of reading, writing, math, and building character, and new ones like technology literacy, the ability to attend and succeed in college, and an ability to solve problems and learn throughout their lifetime. And we must be fiercely committed to leaving no individual - and no socio-economic or racial group -- behind.]

All of us have a role to play, and I ~~deeply~~ believe we must move away from finger-pointing and casting blame, and instead find constructive ways for every individual, every business, every community organization to promote learning and education for our young people.

So, let me describe six principles that I believe should guide our efforts across party lines to make bold changes and dramatic improvements in the education we provide to all of our people. I am going to be talking with the American people in the coming months -- with parents, students, teachers, business leaders, and interested elected officials in both parties -- about how we can make these principles can guide our nation's efforts to ensure a quality education for all.

First, we must start early. This means parents must be deeply involved in the development and education of their children, and it means making quality pre-school available for all families who want it, and a relentless focus on helping our children to read early on. [Elaborate on need and

proposal for making pre-school universally available. And let's be honest with each other -- this debate should be about government or politicians choosing whether parents should stay at home to raise their children or whether children should be sent off to pre-school or child care at an early age. Again, we must come together across party lines to enable every American family to make choices that are right for them -- and for the majority of young children growing up in households with two working parents or a single working parent, that means making available one or two years of high-quality pre-school. And we must respect and support the ability of parents to stay at home with their children as well through such steps as ____]

More
-s
no
choice

Second, none of our efforts to improve schools will succeed without the highest quality, best-prepared teachers and principals in every school, and we must take every possible step to ensure a quality teacher in every classroom and a quality principal in every school. These are the people who spend the most time and shape the education and development of America's most precious resource -- our children. We must honor and lift up this profession, and embrace bold strategies to do so.

Indeed, we have a tremendous challenge and opportunity in the next few years to affect the quality of education for decades to come. 2 million more teachers -- two-thirds of the teaching force -- must be hired in the next ten years to accommodate retirees from an aging teaching force, booming student enrollments, class size reduction efforts, and opportunities that have opened up across the workforce for women who in prior generations would have become teachers.

We need to take every step possible to ensure that the people who become our children's teachers are talented, well-trained, and have the support needed. Best and brightest from all backgrounds. That's why I propose a national effort to provide incentives for talented young people and mid-career professionals to become teachers with scholarships, bonuses, housing assistance, etc. [And possible focus on higher standards to become teachers, higher standards for tenure, shaking up schools of education, promoting alternative certification, targeted salary supplements for teachers in high-need schools, subject areas, national-board certified teachers coupled with appeal for substantially higher teacher salaries coupled with focus on quality and standards for teachers.]

Nothing more important than principals, strong school leaders. We must explore ways to recruit and prepare the most talented people inside and outside education to become leaders in our schools. [Explore creation of a world-class principals academy in every state]

Third, we must empower parents, teachers, and principals to make the right choices for their children. We must invest decision-making in the hands of the people closest to our children by providing parents with the ability to choose the right public school for their child. We must provide principals with the ability to manage their own budgets and choose the teachers they want to recruit, hire, and transfer from their schools. And we must provide teachers the opportunity to make decisions about how their school is run, what teaching methods to use, what kind of professional development and training they get, and even to start and manage their own schools. [Look at things like a public school voucher that follows each student to the public school of their choice.]

Fourth, we must provide our children with individualized attention and connection to caring, dedicated adults. This means smaller classes, and now smaller schools and schools-within-schools, as well as well-supervised after-school and summer school programs with teachers, tutors, mentors and others engaged daily in the lives of children. [Announce small schools or after-school initiative, and say he will be unveiling details of the other later.]

Fifth, values, discipline, safety.

Sixth, no excuses, accountability, real consequences for success and failure. Fixing failing schools, etc, new flex in fed \$ in exchange for accountability.

Seventh, access to college and intensive efforts to make sure that all of our young people get the preparation they need to succeed in college. [summer schools, boot camps, expanded support for college tuition, etc.]

Pick two or three specific announcements, make others later, once a month through the end of the year.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Vice President

For Immediate Release

May 16, 1999

REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE
GRACELAND COLLEGE, LAMONI, IOWA
Sunday, May 16, 1999

President Clinefelter; faculty and staff; family and friends -- it is an honor to be with you to mark this special day. And congratulations to you, the distinguished Class of 1999.

In his invocation this morning, Dr. French shared these powerful words: "Train up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old, they shall not depart from it."

With a proud tradition of career-based education, I know your years at Graceland will strengthen your livelihoods. And I know quite a few of the parents here are happy about that.

Here at Graceland, you also understand that the education we provide is a profound expression of who we are as a people. This is more than a college; it is a community -- of faith, of family, and of shared purpose. As it is written, "to be learned is good if you harken unto the councils of God." And you do.

Today, I want to talk about how we can give millions more American families the extraordinary opportunity you have had: to obtain a world-class education, and the chance to reach for your dreams.

We've seen some positive changes in our schools in recent years: higher standards; tougher curricula; signs of improved academic performance; greater accountability; and local officials taking tough action to turn around their schools. We're fighting right now to raise standards higher still, and hold our schools accountable for real results, ending social promotion the right way.

I'm proud that President Clinton, Secretary Riley and I are helping to lead these changes. But our country's future depends on going farther -- much farther -- in the new century ahead.

In order to stay first in the world economically, we must become first in the world educationally. Aren't the reasons obvious?

How long can we continue generating one-third of the world's economic output if one-third of our students continue to fail in meeting the most basic world reading level?

How long can we expect to continue to be number one in high technology jobs if we continue to be last in the percentage of bachelor's degrees and graduate degrees awarded in science?

How long can we stay first in making new discoveries if we stay dead last out of all countries surveyed in physics?

How long can we continue to lead the world in the number of cars and trucks produced if we continue to follow behind 18 other nations in 12th grade math?

The solution is obvious: to keep the best GDP, we need the best SAT's. And to strengthen our national character, our schools must insist on high standards that demand not just excellence in skills but

also excellence in citizenship, morality, and character.

In order to meet our needs for a dynamic future, we need to shake up the status quo.

I make you this promise today: together, we will bring truly revolutionary change to America's schools. Let's make the next decade America's education decade.

I want to work with parents and teachers to change the whole way we approach learning in this country. Education should start earlier, last longer, and extend through college and throughout our lifetimes. Education should be more individualized, using new technology to match learning to the pace of each child. Education should connect parents to their children's schools and teachers. Education should teach basic skills, and also the good character and values we need for our families to be strong. Education should no longer be just a period in our lives, but a way of life in the 21st Century.

There are three reasons why this challenge is more important than ever before.

First, family life in America is changing. In seven out of ten households, both parents are at work all day. The average two-parent family works almost 500 more hours a year than they did a generation ago.

A generation ago, only seven percent of America's families were single-parent families; the number has almost quadrupled today, to 27 percent. Only about half of all families eat together every day - far less than two decades ago.

What these parents often lack is that most precious of all commodities: time with their children; time to teach them right from wrong; time to pass on their best values.

And even when there is time, challenges to the strength of the family remain. Too often, even when they are under the same roof, a televising set or a video game comes between parent and child.

Lacking guidance from parents, some children fall prey to a culture of chaotic values - a culture with too much meanness, and not enough meaning.

It's not enough just to be in the same house. You have to talk -- a lot. A virtual dead-beat dad isn't much better than a real live dead-beat dad.

Of course, family and faith must be the primary answer. But our schools can be an important part of the solution. Our schools must make parents feel that they have a place and a role, and must make it easier, not harder, to raise safe and strong families.

* * *

There is a second reason we must revolutionize education: our economy is changing. We are in the early stages of an accelerating information revolution that is completely transforming the nature of work and the way we live our lives. Already, nearly 60 percent of companies say they are facing a shortage of the well-educated, skilled workers they need. Two in five manufacturing companies say they can't expand precisely because their workers don't have the right education and skills.

Last month, I met a businessman in Waterloo who was trying to hire new employees. He told me he needed people with technical degrees who could run computers and highly sophisticated machinery - and who could complete training courses in microbiology. I asked him: what do you make? And his answer was: pudding.

Pudding.

In the 21st Century, you need more education to make pudding competitively.

Need any more proof? It's in the pudding.

* * *

There is a third urgent reason for change in education. Because of all the new students, the needs of our schools are growing dramatically.

I'm a part of the Baby Boom generation -- known as the largest generation in American history. When we flooded into America's schools a half-century ago, there were portable classrooms -- Quonset huts left over from World War Two. And there was a shortage of well-trained teachers.

But for the returning veterans, sacrifice did not end on the sands of battle. After winning the war, they came back home and won the peace. After saving Private Ryan, they saved public education. They built new schools and hired new teachers in record numbers. They passed the G.I. Bill. They made the Baby Boomers not just the biggest, but the best-educated generation ever, and we've been reaping the benefits ever since.

But guess what? Last summer, we learned from the Census Bureau that the generation of young people moving through our schools has just passed the Baby Boom; they are now the largest generation in history. The record they set last fall will be shattered every fall for the next ten years. And once again, American students are crammed into overcrowded classrooms, like sardines in a can. Teachers are overburdened. Textbooks are out of date and in short supply. Facilities are falling down.

So now it's our turn to accept responsibility. Will we do it?

We must. Together, as a nation, let us again make the necessary sacrifices to make the largest generation in history the best-prepared and best-educated in our history.

Today, I want to present seven ideas to meet this challenge -- to revolutionize American education for the 21st Century.

First, we must begin at the beginning -- by making high-quality pre-school fully available to every family, for every child, in every community in America.

We now know that the early years of life are critical to a child's development, and have a lifelong impact on a child's well-being. Research also shows us that the right kind of start - through quality pre-school -- can lead to higher IQ's, higher reading and achievement levels, higher graduation rates and greater success in the workplace. I am proposing to enable every state in America to develop and expand the voluntary pre-school programs working families need.

Of course, parents are the first and best teachers. And we should say to families across America -- including every middle class

family: we will help you insure that your child gets the right start toward a bright future.

* * *

Second, in the 21st Century, we must improve teacher quality and elevate the teaching profession, by setting high standards for teachers and giving them the intensive support they need to succeed. And then we need to reward them for excellence.

This whole process must begin with more respect, honor, and appreciation for America's teachers. Teachers have one of the hardest jobs in America. When I see politicians bash our teachers, I have to wonder: how long would they last in a classroom with twenty-five 14-year-olds?

We need to attract a new generation of teachers to the profession. Let's put America's brightest and most dedicated young people to work changing the lives of the children who need it most. Today, I propose the creation of a new 21st Century Teachers Corps -- open to talented young people across the country. Under this plan, if you agree to spend four years teaching in a school that needs your help -- and if you pass a rigorous exam before you set foot in the classroom -- we'll give you up to \$10,000 to pay for college. And for those willing to switch careers for teaching, we'll give you a \$10,000 bonus and pay for the training you need to get into the classroom.

We should give all teachers the smaller classes, modern school buildings, good working conditions, and the real role in decision-making they need. But the best teachers will tell you: we must also raise standards for teachers. We should treat teachers like professionals -- we should pay them like professionals -- and we should hold them to high professional standards.

You had to pass tests to be here today; every new teacher should also have to pass a rigorous test before they set foot in the classroom -- a test that also measures their knowledge of the subject they will teach.

Every new teacher should have the mentors and professional support he or she needs to make the transition into teaching. And all teachers should have access to regular training and professional development and visits to the classrooms of master teachers.

Every new teacher should be required to meet tough standards before becoming licensed or tenured -- with evaluations by teams of accomplished teachers and administrators to make sure they know their subject well, and can teach it well. The granting of a teaching license should be followed by rigorous but fair performance evaluations. And every five years, those evaluations should be used to determine whether a license is renewed.

No teaching license should be a lifetime job guarantee -- but we should give all our teachers the support and training they need to succeed.

I urge faster but fair ways to identify, improve -- and when necessary -- remove low-performing teachers. While we know the vast majority of teachers are doing a good job, we know there are some teachers who aren't. And they need to be removed -- fairly, but quickly.

And if teaching is to be a true profession, we must reward good teaching. We should provide bonuses to master teachers, and those who become certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. We should provide bonuses to all teachers in schools where

students have made significant gains consistently measured over time. And we should help teachers, administrators, and others test new ways of rewarding individual teachers, and groups of teachers, whose students make significant gains, based on valid measures and objective criteria.

Consider this: the new student boom means that we will hire 2.2 million new teachers in the next decade. If we set a national goal that every one of those teachers will be tested, trained, skilled in the newest technology, and willing to make teaching a career, we could dramatically improve our schools right away.

* * *

Third, we need a renewed focus on discipline, character, the right values, and safety -- and we need more parental involvement in our schools.

My heart, and that of America, aches for the families of Columbine High School. We've all searched our souls in the aftermath of this tragedy. And unfortunately, as we know, it was not an isolated incident. In an average year, up to 6,000 American students are expelled for bringing a gun to school.

Obviously, we need to do more to make our schools safe. So today, I propose the creation of second-chance schools -- where kids headed for trouble, and those caught with guns, can receive the strict discipline and intensive services they need. For all schools, there should be a simple policy toward guns: zero tolerance, period. All schools should be gun-free, drug-free, and safe and secure.

We should increase our commitment to after-school care this year, so children have a place to learn in those afternoon hours when most juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, alcohol and drug use occur.

In many schools, teachers feel that discipline has eroded in part because of a lack of support and understanding from parents, and poor communication between parents and teachers about what standards are appropriate and how they should be enforced.

So today I want to propose that we try something new: parents, teachers, and students should all meet together at the beginning of the year, on the first day of school, to agree upon and sign a strict, fair discipline code. Employers should be required to give time-off for these meetings. All parents, teachers, and students should know all the rules -- and the punishment for breaking those rules. That first meeting can also be a chance to encourage regular trips to the school all year long -- and I believe attendance at that first meeting should be a requirement.

If we want parents to be more involved, we must help them have the time to do it. We should extend the Family Leave law, so parents can take time off work to attend not only the beginning-of-the-year meeting, but all parent-teacher conferences -- without fear of losing their jobs. Either we're serious about this or we're not.

Then let's get a commitment from schools to add civic and character education courses -- to teach students that the same values they learn in good homes apply in our schools and in our society.

* * *

Fourth, we should commit ourselves to fundamentally changing the American high school. I envision a new American high school -- with smaller classes, smaller schools, and principals with the power to

lead.

We've done some things wrong in education, and here's one of them: herding all students in a 25-square-mile area into overcrowded, factory-style high schools. When teachers and principals must practice crowd control, it becomes impossible to spot the early warning signs of violence, depression, or academic failure - and it becomes even harder to do something about it.

We should provide incentives to create smaller high schools. And for those that have already gotten too big, let's break them down by creating smaller "schools within schools."

Classes are also way too big. Teachers need fewer students in each classroom so they can pay close attention to each one. We should begin with a national commitment to reduce class size to an average of 18 students in the early grades -- and then aim at average class sizes of twenty students or less across all grades. This will be a major commitment, but it will be worth it, because it will give all our students the individual attention they need to succeed.

And we should empower principals, advised by teams of teachers, to hire their own staffs, regardless of seniority, and manage their own budgets. This would enable schools to choose teachers that fit the mission and approach of the school, including teachers who have entered the profession through high-quality alternative certification pathways. It is time to focus on results, not just process -- on measured competency, not check marks from gatekeepers.

* * *

Fifth, we need an aggressive plan to turn around every failing school in America. Most schools are doing pretty well, and we know how they can improve. But there are too many school districts in America where less than half the students graduate, and where those who do graduate aren't ready for college or good jobs. And that should be recognized for what it is: a national emergency.

Every state and every school district should be required to identify failing schools, and work to turn them around - with strict accountability for results, and strong incentives for success. And if these failing schools don't improve quickly, they should be shut down fairly and fast, and when needed, reopened under a new principal with a full peer evaluation of every teacher, intensive training for those who need it, and fair ways to improve or remove low-performing teachers.

We need to make summer school much more widely available, to give extra help to kids who need it -- and I urge serious consideration of the model set by Mayor Rich Daley, the President of Chicago's Board of Education, Gery Chico, and Chicago schools chief Paul Vallas. We need to follow the leadership of the late John Stanford of Seattle and affirm that every child can learn -- and will learn.

Parents should have more choice in their children's public schools -- especially those whose children are stuck in low-performing schools. We need more public school choice, and more competition -- to apply the pressure that will improve all schools. And of course we must reject the false promise of siphoning public school funding away to private schools. That would only make things much worse.

Let us realize that education is the greatest anti-poverty program, the most powerful anti-discrimination strategy we could ever have. Every child in America must have full opportunity -- regardless of race, creed, or national origin.

We should be proud that the gap in high school completion between blacks and whites has now been virtually eliminated. But the drop-out rate among Hispanic Americans is far higher -- with barely half finishing high school, and far fewer going on to college. We need to continue our aggressive plan to reduce the Hispanic drop-out rate. And we should challenge every state and school district to cut in half the achievement gap between rich and poor, and between racial and ethnic groups in the next decade.

* * *

Sixth, we should realize that the technological revolution makes possible an instructional revolution -- where we can replace standardized textbook learning with individualized learning matched to every child's pace and potential, and learning style.

For the first time, 21st Century technology will soon free us from the search for one curriculum that fits all. In the high technology school of the future, the ultimate class size will be one -- because even if there are eighteen or twenty others in that room, there will be an unprecedented, until now impossible, degree of individual attention. If we use it right, higher technology can mean the same basic knowledge for all, but higher individual achievement for every child.

The power of computer technology is now doubling every 18 months. The cost reductions -- 30 percent a year -- are startling, and they will continue. Let's put that power to work for our children's education. For example, costs for special education have been rising dramatically; we can use technology to manage those costs, while providing a better education for every child with special needs, and doing a better job of helping states bear the burden.

But when we talk about technology in education, let's remember: teachers can't take advantage of it unless they have training in how to use the technology. And when we talk about individualizing education, let's remember that teachers need less paperwork, not more. We should focus on results, not process and documentation. We have to expand teacher training in how to use the power of the Internet and the newest and best educational software -- and make sure it is available to every school, rich or poor.

So we must quickly finish the job of wiring every classroom and library in America to the Information Superhighway, and teach kids how to use it safely and well. America was the pioneer of universal education; now America must become the pioneer of universal computer literacy. Let us set a goal that every child will be computer literate by the eighth grade. But let us also always remember that technology is worse than worthless unless it is coupled with the right values.

I also propose today that we establish a program of home e-tutors, by creating a nationwide army of volunteer on-line tutors and mentors, carefully screened for safety and qualifications.

* * *

Seventh, we must give every family the ability to save and pay for their children's college education, and to continue their own education throughout their lifetimes. We have made progress, but much more is needed.

We help people save for retirement tax-free, and help them pay their mortgages tax-free. Now we must help them save tax-free for one

of the biggest expenses most families will ever face in life -- sending a child to college.

We must start by helping families meet the costs of tomorrow by saving today. I propose a National Tuition Savings program, bringing together programs in more than thirty states, and helping the other twenty states to create them for the very first time. Many of these programs let families invest their money in special accounts, which grow tax-free. We should increase access to these programs, allow each parent's savings to be used in any participating state, and use incentives to encourage states that do not have the programs to create them. Under this plan, if you make small, regular contributions to the program after your child's birth, you'll be able to afford college tuition -- with protection from taxes, inflation, and rising college costs. This program will also be available to grandparents who make contributions after the birth of a grandchild. Tipper and I are expecting our first grandchild at the end of next month -- and we would love to participate in this program.

Next, we should encourage employers to help employees save tax-free for college and job training. In the coming months, I will lay out my plan to create new 401 (j) accounts that let you save for job training, education, and lifelong learning, and let those savings grow tax-free. You could use this account for yourself, your spouse, even your child's college tuition. This will be a powerful new tool to help people save for learning.

* * *

These are my ideas for revolutionary change in our schools. It is an agenda that is ambitious, but responsible. Every one of these proposals will be fully paid for, within a balanced budget. They will bring about revolutionary progress. ~~Some say that there is no national role in helping communities improve their schools. I say that education is our number-one national priority for investing in the future. And we must take dramatic steps to help states and communities provide a quality education for their children.~~

I want our nation to act on the wisdom you understand so well here at Graceland: ~~that the quality of American education is a powerful, if unspoken, expression of our values. As such, our schools must be orderly and disciplined, modern and in good repair, and committed to excellence.~~

In the education decade to come, let us strengthen our schools, to strengthen our families. Let us renew education, to renew opportunity. It will not be easy; the steps I have outlined are just the beginning. But this much I know: if it is a decade shaped by your experience, sustained by your faith, built on the hard lessons you have learned at Graceland, it will be the best decade this nation has ever known, and a great beginning for the 21st Century.

Congratulations, and Godspeed as you begin your wonderful journey.

The College Completion Challenge Grant Act of 1999

Legislation

A BILL

To assist institutions of higher education help at-risk students stay in school and complete their 4-year postsecondary academic programs.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, this Act may be cited as the "College Completion Challenge Grant Program of 1999".

PROGRAM AUTHORIZED

SEC. 101. Subpart 2 of part A of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1132a et seq.) is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new chapter:

"CHAPTER 4—COLLEGE COMPLETION CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM

"FINDINGS

"SEC. 408A. Congress makes the following findings:

"(1) Students from low-income families are significantly more likely to leave a 4-year institution of higher education without a baccalaureate degree than are students with higher incomes.

"(2) Even among students with above average grades, low-income students are still more likely to leave a 4-year institution of higher education without a baccalaureate degree than are students with higher incomes, especially low-income students enrolled at private institutions.

"(3) This lack of persistence to completion of a baccalaureate degree continues to contribute to the gap in educational attainment and ultimate income levels between disadvantaged students and their more affluent classmates.

"(4) While the focus of Federal student financial assistance and higher education programs has traditionally been to ensure access to postsecondary education, the Federal Government should also address this lack of persistence to baccalaureate degree completion.

"(5) The amount of grant assistance provided to postsecondary students is critical to their persistence and degree attainment.

"(6) In addition to economic disadvantage, the following factors significantly contribute to students dropping out of a 4-year institution of higher education:

"(A) A delayed entry into postsecondary education after graduating from high school.

"(B) A low grade point average.

"(C) Working full-time while enrolled.

"(D) Being a first-generation college student.

"(E) Being less engaged with an academic program.

"(7) Most students who leave college without a degree drop out during the first two years of study.

"(8) At-risk students who receive targeted support services persist to degree completion at higher rates than at-risk students who do not receive such services.

"(9) Educators interested in student retention have long viewed intensive summer programs for incoming first-year students as very important in helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds become acclimated to college life and in improving retention.

"PURPOSE AND PROGRAM AUTHORITY

"SEC. 408B. (a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this program is to assist institutions of higher education to help students who are at risk of ending their postsecondary education prior to obtaining baccalaureate degrees, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, to stay in school until they obtain those degrees.

"(b) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—From funds appropriated pursuant to section 408G for each fiscal year, the Secretary is authorized to, in accordance with the requirements of this chapter, award competitive grants to eligible institutions to enable them to pay the Federal share of the costs of carrying out programs designed to meet the purpose of this chapter.

"(c) DURATION OF GRANT.—A grant made under this chapter shall be awarded for a period of 3 years.

"INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY

"SEC. 408C. (a) IN GENERAL.—An institution of higher education is eligible to receive a grant under this chapter if the institution-

"(1) meets the requirements of section 102; and

"(2) awards baccalaureate degrees, or, subject to subsection (b)(1), associate degrees.

"(b) LIMITATIONS.—(1) ASSOCIATE DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS.—An eligible applicant that awards only associate degrees may apply for a grant under this chapter only as part of a consortium that includes one or more institutions of higher education that awards baccalaureate degrees.

"(2) MULTIPLE GRANTS.—An institution that receives a grant under this chapter may compete to receive a subsequent grant, but may not receive more than two grants under this chapter.

"APPLICATION PROCESS

"SEC. 408D. (a)(1) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible applicant that desires a grant under this chapter shall submit to the Secretary an application for that grant at such time and containing such information as the Secretary may prescribe.

"(2) DEMONSTRATION OF PRIOR COMMITMENT.—In order to receive a grant under this chapter, an applicant shall demonstrate in its application, to the satisfaction of the Secretary, its successful prior commitment to the purposes of this chapter, through the prior support of at least one of the activities described in section 408E(a).

"(b) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—(1) IN GENERAL.—The Federal share of the cost of programs assisted under this chapter shall not be more than 50 percent, and the matching funds shall be from non-Federal sources.

"(2) CONSORTIA.—The Secretary may establish in regulations the matching requirement applicable to a consortium of institutions in which some of the institutions are eligible for a waiver of the matching requirement under section 395 or section 515.

"(c) COORDINATION REQUIREMENT.—Each eligible institution shall ensure that the activities provided under this chapter are, to the extent practicable, coordinated with, complement, and enhance related services under other Federal and non-Federal programs, and do not duplicate the services already provided at that institution.

"(d) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—Funds under this chapter shall be used to supplement, and not supplant, non-Federal funds expended for existing programs.

"USE OF FUNDS

"Sec. 408E. AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—(a) IN GENERAL.—An eligible institution that receives a grant under this chapter shall, except as provided in subsection (b), use the grant to provide services or assistance to students at risk of leaving their programs of study without baccalaureate degrees, particularly economically disadvantaged students, by carrying out one or more of the following:

"(1) Implementing an intensive summer program for incoming first-year students (or students entering their second or third year of postsecondary education if the institution can demonstrate that it is addressing the needs of first-year students and that a summer program could help retention of second- or third-year students at risk of dropping out), provided that the institution demonstrates in its application that it has a strong commitment to student retention through additional activities.

"(2) Developing a strong student support service program, targeted to students in their first two years of postsecondary education, that includes activities such as:

"(A) peer tutoring;

"(B) mentoring programs involving faculty or upper class students;

"(C) activities to assist students currently enrolled in a 2-year institution to secure admission and financial assistance in a 4-year program of postsecondary education;

"(D) activities to assist students in securing admission and financial assistance for enrollment in graduate and professional programs;

"(E) assistance in course selection; and

"(F) cultural events.

"(3) Providing grants to students in their first two years of postsecondary education, in an amount not less than required under subsection (c), except that a recipient that provides grants under this paragraph shall also provide services under paragraphs (1) or (2), or both.

"(b) SPECIAL RULE.—A recipient of funds under this chapter may serve students who have completed their first two years of postsecondary education if it demonstrates in its application, to the satisfaction of the Secretary, that—

"(1) these students are at high risk of dropping out; and

"(2) it will first meet the needs of all its eligible first- and second-year students for services under this chapter.

"(c) GRANT SIZE.—(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may, by regulation, establish minimum student grant award levels for purposes of subsection (a)(3), taking into account such factors as the different costs of attendance associated with public and private institutions.

"(2) EXCEPTION.—If the Secretary does not establish minimum student grant award levels under paragraph (1), or if an institution wishes to provide grants under subsection (a)(3) in an amount less than the minimum set by the Secretary, the institution shall demonstrate in its application, to the satisfaction of the Secretary, that the size of the grants it will provide is appropriate and likely to have a significant effect on the persistence problem at that institution.

"RELATION TO OTHER STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

"Sec. 408F. RELATION TO OTHER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—A grant provided to a student by an eligible institution from an award made under this chapter shall not be considered in determining that student's need for grant or work assistance under this title, except that in no case shall the total amount of student financial assistance awarded to a student under this title exceed that student's cost of attendance, as defined by section 472.

"AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

"Sec. 408G. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this chapter \$35,000,000 for fiscal year 2000, and such sums as may be necessary for each of the 4 succeeding fiscal years.

"(b) SPECIAL RULE.—From the amounts appropriated under subsection (a) for any fiscal year, the Secretary may reserve up to 1 percent of such amount for that fiscal year in order to carry out an evaluation of the program authorized by this chapter."

EFFECTIVE DATE

SEC. 102. The amendments made by section 101 shall be effective on October 1, 1999.

The College Completion Challenge Grant Act of 1999

Section-by-Section Analysis

Section 101. Section 101 of the bill would amend subpart 2 of Part A of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1132a et seq., hereinafter referred to as the Act) by adding a new chapter 4, authorizing the College Completion Challenge Grant (CCCCG) Program.

Proposed new section 408A of the Act would set out the Congressional findings for the proposed new program. Students from low-income families are significantly more likely to leave a 4-year institution of higher education without a baccalaureate degree than are students with higher incomes.

Specifically, the baccalaureate degree attainment rate for full-time students from families from the bottom income quartile was 24 percentage points less than the rate for full-time students from families from the top income quartile (44% vs. 68%).

Even among students with above average grades, low-income students are still more likely to leave a

4-year institution of higher education without a baccalaureate degree than are students with higher

incomes, especially at private institutions. Contributing to the gap in educational attainment between

disadvantaged students and their more affluent classmates is the fact that the focus of Federal student

financial assistance and higher education programs has traditionally been to ensure access to postsecondary education, and not on the lack of persistence to a baccalaureate degree. The amount

of grant assistance provided to postsecondary students is also critical to their persistence and degree

attainment. Through the proposed new CCCC program, the Federal Government would expand its

role in student financial assistance programs for postsecondary education to address this lack of persistence to baccalaureate degree completion.

In addition to economic disadvantage, a number of other factors contribute significantly to a student

dropping out of a 4-year institution of higher education. Those factors include: a delayed entry into

postsecondary education after graduating from high school; a low grade point average; working full

time while enrolled; being a first-generation college student; and being less engaged with an academic

program. Grants to institutions under this program would assist these institutions in providing services

that could mitigate the effects of these factors on a student's likelihood of dropping out of a 4-year institution of higher education.

Further, most students who leave college without a degree drop out during the first two years of study. Nearly half of all low-income students will have dropped out of their programs of study by the end of the second year, as compared to only 27 percent of higher income students.

Additionally, at-risk students who receive targeted support services persist to degree completion at higher rates than do at-risk students who do not receive such services. The Department's ongoing evaluation of the Student Support Services program has shown that support services do make a significant difference on three separate student outcomes—grades, credits earned, and retention. The

effects, although not large, usually persist over three years. Students' grade point averages were increased by a mean of 0.15 in the first year, 0.11 in the second year, and 0.11 in the first three years combined. The number of credits earned was increased by a mean of 1.25 in the first year, 0.79 in the second year, 0.71 in the third year, and 2.25 in the first three years combined.

Retention

at the same institution to the second year was increased by 7 percent, and by 9 percent for retention

to the third year. Retention to the third year at any institution of higher education was increased by 3

percent. These results could be improved by combining these kinds of services with the other services that would be offered by the proposed program.

Finally, educators interested in student retention have long viewed intensive summer programs for

incoming first-year students as very important in helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds

become acclimated to college life and in improving retention. This program would provide, at the

most critical time, the kinds of services most likely to achieve retention for those students most at risk

of leaving their programs of study without their baccalaureate degrees.

Proposed new section 408B of the Act would establish the program's statement of purpose and program authority. Under proposed new section 408B(a), the purpose of the CCCG program would be to assist institutions of higher education in helping students who are at risk of ending their

postsecondary education prior to obtaining a baccalaureate degree, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, to stay in school until they complete their baccalaureate degrees.

Proposed new section 408B(b) would authorize the Secretary, from funds appropriated for each fiscal year and in accordance with the requirements of the proposed new CCCG program, to award

competitive grants to eligible institutions to enable them to pay the Federal share of the costs of carrying out programs designed to meet the purpose stated in proposed new section 408B(a).

Proposed new section 408C of the Act would establish the institutional eligibility requirements for receiving a grant under the proposed new CCCG program. Proposed new section 408C(a) would provide that eligible applicants for grants under the proposed new CCCG program would be institutions of higher education that meet the requirements of section 102 of the Act, (the definition of an institution of higher education used for purposes of title IV of the Act), and that award baccalaureate or associate degrees. An institution that awards only associate degrees, however, could apply for a grant under the proposed new CCCG program only if it applied as part of a consortium that included one or more institutions of higher education that awarded baccalaureate degrees. Proposed new section 408C would also establish the requirement that an institution that receives a grant under the proposed new CCCG program may receive no more than two such grants.

Proposed new section 408D of the Act would establish the application process requirements. Proposed new section 408D(a) would provide that an applicant that desires a grant under the proposed new CCCG program must submit to the Secretary an application at such time and containing such information as the Secretary may prescribe. Proposed new section 408D would also require that an applicant demonstrate in its application, to the satisfaction of the Secretary, its prior successful commitment to assisting institutions of higher education in helping students who are at risk of ending their postsecondary education prior to obtaining a baccalaureate degree stay in school until they complete those degrees. While students are primarily responsible for their own success, institutions have a responsibility to assist them, particularly those students at risk of failing to complete their baccalaureate degrees. The new program is therefore intended to assist institutions that have made efforts to increase the retention of students.

Proposed new section 408D(b) of the Act would describe the matching requirement for institutions that receive a grant under the CCCG program. Proposed new section 408D(b)(1) provides that the Federal share of the cost of the program cannot be more than 50%, and the matching funds must be from non-Federal sources. However, the Secretary intends to use his authority under section 395 of the Act to waive this matching requirement for institutions eligible for assistance under Part A or B of title III of the Act, and under section 515 of the Act to waive the matching requirement for institutions eligible for assistance under title V of the Act, namely, Historically Black Colleges and

Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other institutions of higher education that have relatively low educational and general expenditures and serve low-income students. The Secretary also intends to regulate on the matching requirement as it pertains to a consortium of institutions in which only some of the institutions would be eligible for the waiver of the matching requirement.

Proposed new section 408D(c) of the Act would require an institution applying for a grant to ensure that the activities it would provide if it received a grant under the proposed new CCCG program would be coordinated with, complement, and enhance related services under other programs, and would not duplicate services already provided at that institution. Proposed new section 408D(d) of the Act would provide that funds under the proposed new CCCG program would have to be used to supplement, and not supplant, non-Federal funds expended for existing programs.

Proposed new section 408E of the Act details the authorized uses of funds received under the proposed new CCCG program. Proposed new section 408E(a) would require an institution, except as provided in subsection (b), to use a grant to provide services or assistance to students at risk of leaving their programs of study without baccalaureate degrees, particularly economically disadvantaged students. The three types of activities for which institutions could use funds received under the proposed new CCCG program would be: intensive summer programs, student support services, and grants for students. While summer intensive programs have been shown to be effective in increasing student persistence, they are most effective when the institution is committed to student retention in other ways as well. Therefore, institutions could implement an intensive summer program for incoming first-year students, (or students entering their second or third year of postsecondary education if the institution can demonstrate that it is addressing the needs of its first-year students and that a summer program could help retention of second- or third-year students at risk of dropping out), but could do so only if they could demonstrate a strong commitment to student retention through other activities.

Under proposed new section 408E(a)(2), an institution could also use funds under the proposed new CCCG program to develop a strong student support service program, targeted to students in their first two years of postsecondary education. This could include activities such as peer tutoring; mentoring by faculty or upper class students; activities to assist students currently enrolled in a 2-year institution secure admission and financial assistance in a 4-year program of postsecondary education;

activities to assist students in securing admission and financial assistance for enrollment in graduate and professional programs; course selection assistance; and cultural events.

Finally, proposed new section 408E(a)(3) would provide that institutions could use funds received under the proposed new CCCG program to provide grants to students in their first two years of postsecondary education, but only if it also provided an intensive summer program for incoming first-year students, or developed a student support service program, targeted to students in their first two years of postsecondary education, or both. The goal of the program is not simply to create another Federal grant program; the grant aid provided under the new CCCG program would be in the context of specific efforts to increase student success.

Although the proposed new CCCG program would require institutions to target services to students in their first two years of postsecondary education, proposed new section 408E(b) of the Act would allow an institution to serve students who have completed their first two years only if it could demonstrate in its application, to the satisfaction of the Secretary, that these students are at high risk of dropping out, and it will first meet the needs of all its eligible first- and second-year students for services under the CCCG program. While most students who drop out leave during the first two years of study, some do leave during the subsequent years. For example, many students fail to make the transition from a 2-year institution to a 4-year institution. This program could allow institutions to provide services to those students even after completing two years of postsecondary education.

Proposed new section 408E(c)(1) of the Act would provide the Secretary with the authority to set, by regulation, a minimum student grant award level for those institutions that provide grants to students. In setting a minimum student grant award level, the Secretary would take into account such factors as the different costs of attendance associated with public and private institutions. If the Secretary did not establish a minimum student grant award, or if an institution wanted to provide grants below the minimum set by the Secretary, proposed new section 408D(c)(2) would require the institution to demonstrate in its application, to the satisfaction of the Secretary, that the size of the grants it would provide were appropriate and likely to have a significant effect on the persistence problem at that institution.

Proposed new section 408F of the Act would describe how a grant to a student would affect the

calculation of that student's need for other title IV assistance. Under proposed new section 408F, a grant provided to a student by an eligible institution from an award made under the proposed new CCCG program would not be considered in determining that student's need for grant or work assistance under title IV of the Act. However, the total amount of financial assistance awarded to a student under title IV, including a grant provided under the proposed new CCCG program, could not exceed that student's cost of attendance, as defined by section 472 of the Act.

Proposed new section 408G(a) of the Act would authorize the appropriation of \$35,000,000 to carry out this program for fiscal year 2000, and such sums as may be necessary for each of the 4 succeeding fiscal years. Proposed new section 408G(b) of the Act would authorize the Secretary to reserve up to 1% of the appropriation for that fiscal year in order to carry out an evaluation of the CCCG program.

Section 102. Section 102 of the bill would state that the amendments made by this bill would be effective on October 1, 1999.

Honorable Albert Gore, Jr.
President of the Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President:

I am pleased to submit for your consideration the "College Completion Challenge Grant Act of 1999," a legislative proposal that would help institutions of higher education expand their efforts to increase the rate at which low-income and other at-risk students complete baccalaureate degree programs.

Students from low-income families are significantly more likely to leave a 4-year institution of higher education without a baccalaureate degree than are students from families with higher incomes. Only 44 percent of students from low-income families who were enrolled full time during their first year of college completed a baccalaureate degree within five years. This completion rate is 24 percentage points lower than the 68 percent completion rate among students from upper-income families.

In addition to economic disadvantage, a recent report by the National Center for Education Statistics, Stopouts or Stayouts? Undergraduates Who Leave College in Their First Year,

concludes that there are a number of factors significantly associated with students dropping out of a four-year college or university. These factors include: having a low to failing cumulative grade point average (under 2.0); delaying entry into postsecondary education after graduating from high school; being less engaged with their academic program; working full time while enrolled; and being a first-generation college student. This legislative proposal would allow institutions of higher education to help mitigate those factors most significantly associated with the failure to complete baccalaureate degree programs.

Specifically, there are three different forms of services or assistance that an institution could provide under the proposed new College Completion Challenge Grant (CCCG) program. An institution could implement an intensive summer program, develop strong student support services, provide direct grant aid to students, or a combination of these activities. Intensive summer programs could be provided only if the institution demonstrates in its application that it has a strong commitment to student retention through additional activities. Support services under the proposed new program could include peer tutoring, mentor programs, activities to assist students currently enrolled in a 2-year institution to secure admission and financial assistance in a 4-year program of postsecondary education, activities to assist students in securing admission and financial assistance for graduate and professional programs, assistance in course selection, and cultural events. If an institution chose to provide grants to students under the proposed new College Completion Challenge Grant Program, it would be required to do so in combination with at least one of the other two authorized activities, and those grants would have to meet certain minimum amounts and supplement other Federal grant assistance, such as Federal Pell Grants.

While each institution would determine which combination of services and assistance to offer for its at-risk students, the particular services and assistance that would be available under this proposal are designed to address the factors most significantly associated with the failure to complete baccalaureate degree programs. Support services and intensive summer programs would help to address the factors of the low grade point average, lower engagement with the academic program, and first-generation college student status. Intensive summer programs offered for students entering

their first year of postsecondary education would also help prevent students from delaying their entry into college. Finally, a substantial increase in grant aid would reduce some students' need to work full time while enrolled, and address some of the concerns of a first generation college student regarding student loan debt burden and the availability of adequate financial aid.

Since low-income and at-risk students are most likely to leave a program of postsecondary education during the first two years, an institution would generally be required to focus services and assistance on students in their first two years of postsecondary education. Although this program would require institutions to target students in their first two years of postsecondary education, an institution could serve students who have completed their first two years if it could demonstrate in its application, to the satisfaction of the Secretary, that these students are at high risk of dropping out, and it will first meet the needs of all its eligible first- and second-year students for services under the proposed new CCCG program.

The proposed new CCCG program would help to eliminate the discrepancy that currently exists in baccalaureate degree attainment rates between students of low- and high-income families by supporting the specific activities that research has shown to improve student retention for students at risk of leaving a 4-year institution without a baccalaureate degree. It would build on the successes of TRIO's Student Support Services Program under section 402D of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and student financial assistance programs by combining selected elements of each and narrowly focusing that combination of services and assistance on at-risk students in the early years of postsecondary education. It would also build on the successes of the participating institutions, requiring institutions to demonstrate a prior successful commitment to helping low-income and other at-risk students stay in school until they complete their baccalaureate degrees.

I urge the speedy enactment of the "College Completion Challenge Grant Act of 1999" by Congress.

It would help to ensure that all Americans not only have access to postsecondary education, but also the support necessary to ensure that they complete that education and receive their degrees.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this

proposal to the Congress and that its adoption would be in accord with the program of the President.