



Daily E-Brief

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POLICY BRIEFING

Save the Date for NCAN's second annual event on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC! On Wednesday, April 18, join your fellow NCAN members for an informative day on Capitol Hill.

ACCESS and SUCCESS

Education Department Signals New Direction on Graduation Rates

by Charles Dervarics, Diverse, 4/16/2012

Community colleges and some minority-serving institutions stand to gain from a decision by the Obama administration to broaden the definition of college success to include part-time and transfer students who may take longer – and more circuitous routes – to earn a degree.

The announcement would require colleges and universities to include part-time and transfer students when measuring graduation rates, a key factor in national studies of post-secondary institutions and their value. Currently, graduation rates are based only on the percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen who complete their programs.

Two-year colleges and four-year institutions serving urban students are among those who long have argued that the current indicator undervalues their work, leaving them with unfairly low success rates.

Can Colleges Manufacture Motivation?

by Dan Berrett, The Chronicle, 4/15/2012

Motivation is often thought to be a fixed, inborn personality trait whose presence or absence helps explain why some students succeed while others fail to graduate.

Recent research, including papers presented here at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, a forthcoming book, and a well-regarded longitudinal survey of three cohorts of 17,000 students at 49 institutions, have taken a different view. Motivation, these researchers argue, is far more malleable, and colleges wield significant power in instilling—and discouraging—it in their students.

"Motivation is an outcome of college," said Daniel F. Chambliss, professor of sociology at Hamilton College, whose book *How College Works* will be published by Harvard University Press. "It energizes people to want to learn more and go out in the world and grab it by the throat."

Opening Up a Path to Four-Year Degrees

by Michael Winerip, The New York Times, 4/15/2012

PHILADELPHIA — At the end of his first year at the Community College of Philadelphia, Christopher Thomas decided that his goal — to go back to school and

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CAREERS

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get a degree — was no longer worth it. He was in debt from thousands of dollars in student loans. After class, he rode a bus an hour and a half to a suburban restaurant where he worked as a waiter. When the shift ended at midnight, it took him three buses to get home. He couldn't afford a computer, so in the middle of the night, he walked to his aunt's house and used hers to finish his class work.

He got seven A's and a C, but the plan was for eight.

Mr. Thomas was 36, living in a spare bedroom at his grandmother's house and doing much of his sleeping on the Route 124 bus. "I'm done," he told friends. But he wasn't. A woman in the college's Institutional Advancement department, Patricia Conroy, kept sending e-mails about a \$2,000 scholarship. "WHY DON'T YOU APPLY FOR THIS," she wrote. He won one. Professors spoke about his promise. Friends said it would be a crime.

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DIVERSITY and EQUITY

[U.S. Education Secretary Duncan Delivers College Completion Message to Civil Rights Group](#)

by Jamaal Abdul-Alim, *Diverse*, 4/13/2012

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The country won't regain its position as the most college-educated nation in the world unless it eliminates disparities in public education at the pre-school through high school levels, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan told a gathering of civil rights activists on Thursday.

"For everything we said we cared about, the fact of the matter remains that there's tremendous inequality in opportunity for children where it matters the most," Duncan said to attendees of the 14th annual convention of the National Action Network founded by the Rev. Al Sharpton.

The convention drew roughly 2,000 people, about 100 of whom attended the "National Education Breakfast" segment of the convention where Duncan spoke.

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PAYING for COLLEGE

[The End of Confusing Financial Aid Awards](#)

by Lynn O'Shaughnessy, *cbsnews.com*, 4/13/2012

(MoneyWatch) COMMENTARY It can be confusing trying to decipher a financial aid award. In a recent post looking at whether a financial aid award was any good, I wrote about the difficulties that families experience when financial aid awards arrive.

Fortunately, help is on the way. The federal government recently unveiled a valuable interactive tool that will assist families evaluate any financial aid award. The financial aid tool, which was created by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, also gives families the opportunity to compare award letters at the nation's four- or two-year schools. Just as important, the tool will also provide families with an idea of what the cost of borrowing for college will be for their household.

The new tool will help families who receive confusing award letters or awards that

make changes, or with any questions you may have regarding the Careers page.

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don't include all the necessary numbers. For instance, some schools produce award letters that never mention what the cost of the institution is. Sometimes schools do not clearly identify the loans in a package, leading some families to mistakenly assume that they are grants. Many schools don't include what the interest rates or monthly payments would be for families who borrow for college.

Whose Offer is the Sweetest

by Tanya Caldwell, New York Times, 4/12/2012

THE applications have been filed, the acceptance letters gleefully read aloud. But before choosing where to enroll, students should carefully examine the financial aid offers presented by prospective colleges. We asked Zac Bissonnette, author of "Debt-Free U.," and Kalman A. Chany, author of "Paying for College Without Going Broke" and president of Campus Consultants, a New York-based financial aid advisory company, to discuss the best ways to compare offers. Excerpts from their answers follow.

MR. CHANY: While the descriptions of the various aid programs will vary tremendously from college to college, there are really only three categories of assistance that will be in the award letter: gift aid (grants and/or scholarships), work-study job opportunities, and loans. First, to be sure you are comparing apples with apples, you will need to know the cost of attendance for each school (the sum of tuition and fees; room and board — or an allowance for living expenses if you're commuting from home — plus other allowances). Schools' estimates, though, may not be realistic. Consider about \$1,000 for books (some majors, like biology and architecture, may need even more), an estimated cost for two or three round trips between a boarding-away campus and home, plus \$1,500 to \$2,000 for personal expenses.

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POLICY and ADVOCACY

Romney Vows to Shrink Education Department

by Staff, Insider Higher Ed, 4/16/2012

Mitt Romney, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, on Sunday evening vowed at a closed-door fund-raising event that he would substantially shrink the Education Department if he is elected, NBC News reported. In his campaign, Romney has not made many policy proposals on education. But he was more detailed Sunday in outlining two possibilities for the Education Department. "The Department of Education: I will either consolidate with another agency, or perhaps make it a heck of a lot smaller. I'm not going to get rid of it entirely," Romney said. He said that one reason to keep the agency was to have a federal role in pushing back against teachers' unions.

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SUSTAINABILITY and RESOURCES

Sun Life Financial Accepting Grant Applications From Nonprofit Organizations for Sun Life Rising Star Awards

by Staff, The Foundation Center, 4/13/2012

The United States subsidiary of Sun Life Financial, Inc. has announced that it is accepting applications for the Sun Life Rising Star Award program from nonprofit organizations that advocate for youth from underserved communities.

Now in its third year, the Rising Star program is designed to address low high school graduation rates in large urban school districts by providing financial resources and education to students and nonprofit organizations committed to increasing success for students in high school and beyond, as well as to promote financial literacy as a means to achieve life-long financial wellness and stability. This year, Sun Life Financial expanded the program to seven cities, from five in 2011, and will award grants and scholarships to outstanding students and nonprofit organizations in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, Philadelphia, and South Florida.

Sprint Invites Grant Applications for Local Giving Program

by Staff, The Foundation Center, 4/12/2012

Since 2009, Sprint has offered the Sprint Local Grant Program in the markets of Atlanta, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, and New York City.

Through the 2012 program, three local 501(c)(3) organizations in each market are selected for Sprint Foundation grants (one each at the \$25,000, \$15,000, and \$10,000 levels). Grants go to support programs that provide a meaningful impact in Sprint's philanthropic focus areas of youth development (including mentoring, leadership, and academic achievement), arts and culture, and environmental stewardship.

The Sprint Local Grant Program guidelines, an FAQ, and the application form are available at the Sprint Web site.

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DATA and EVALUATION

Regional Education Labs Explore Alliances on College, Career Readiness

by Sarah D. Sparks, Education Week, 4/15/2012

The latest iteration of the nation's regional educational laboratories, launched this spring, has started to reach out to states, districts and other groups to tackle issues like college and career readiness.

Researchers of the labs for the West, Pacific and Northeast and Islands regions told American Educational Research Association conference attendees on Saturday that working with community members and educators is essential to define what it means to be college- and career-ready—and definitions may vary considerably from one region to the next.

In the Northeast, Julie Riordan of the Education Development Center said the lab joined the existing New England Secondary Schools Consortium of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont, which was already delving into the longitudinal data for high school graduation, college and even labor. Riordan said the lab has expanded the existing alliance's scope to include Massachusetts and New York, and pulled in districts from each state to develop a longitudinal study of students' college and career trajectories, with the goal to develop a new readiness assessment.

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