

Because everyone deserves a chance, we affirm; resolved: In the United States, students should be guaranteed two years of free tuition to a community or technical college.

Observation One: The Affirmative can win in three independent ways. The first is by showing more people would enroll in community college because that means, even at current graduation rates, more students would attain a degree. The second is by demonstrating that more people could graduate because it again leads to a higher degree attainment. The third way is to underscore that community college is a beneficial resource that can produce positive economic outcomes because it would prove that community college is effective and thus worth investing in.

Contention One: Informing the people.

In addition the financial barrier to college enrollment, a lot of people lack the information to sign up. Granting free tuition helps in three ways.

First, **Richard Kahlenberg of The Atlantic explains** that the current financial aid system, Pell Grants, entail complicated and difficult aid forms. He argues that calling tuition 'free' upfront instead encourages more participation.

Second, **Sara Goldrick-Rab of the University Wisconsin-Madison details** that economically disadvantaged parents are more likely to lack the knowledge of the cost of college. Knowledgeable parents overestimated the cost of a two-year college by just five percent, whereas parents lacking information overestimated the cost by 228 percent, which leads to discouragement for attendance.

By creating an easy-to-understand system, the likelihood that lower-income students enroll in college increases, providing them a gateway to a better future. **Edward St. John discusses** that the guarantee of aid improves the likelihood that low-income students would prepare and enroll in college.

Ultimately, an associate's degree cannot be undervalued. **Mark Schneider of the American Institutes for Research quantifies** that an associate's degree leads to an increase in lifetime earnings by \$259,000, or 4 percent, over a 40-year work-life.

Contention Two: Resting Easy

Alicia Dowd of the University of Massachusetts Boston finds that students now have to take out more loans to finance their community college education because tuition is rising. In fact, **Claire Zillman of Fortune Magazine reports** that amongst those students who take out loans to finance community college, the average debt is \$10,000.

There exists a three-fold harm to student loans.

First, **Dowd continues** that taking a loan reduces the probability of persistence, or re-enrollment the following year, by 15 percent. If the goal is also about attainment, this runs counter to that objective.

Second, **Dora Givecha of the University of North Carolina Greensboro highlights** that \$10,000 worth of student debt increases the likelihood of credit denial by six percent and bankruptcy by seven percent. When the point of college is enabling social mobility, debt stacks the deck against students.

Third, **Jeffrey Selingo** writes in his book *College (Un)bound* that former students make a decade's worth of decisions with debt hanging over their heads and often times their parents sign or cosign on loans, meaning that debt became an intergenerational problem. **Joseph Stiglitz from Columbia University corroborates in his book *The Price of Inequality*** that middle- and lower-class families that struggle to make ends meet are unable to invest in their children, reinforcing cyclical poverty.

The guarantee of free tuition removes any strings attached or requisites for repayment. Students are able to focus on their studies, aren't crippled by debt, and able to break to cycle of poverty.

Contention Three: Investing in the Future

Stiglitz again adds that it is uniquely the government's obligation to prepare works to change sectors from where they were needed yesterday to where they will be needed tomorrow. Unfortunately, thus far, cuts in higher education are not enabling that possibility.

Selingo again explains in his book that one of the main advantages of community college is that they have programs tailored to local and regional economic demands, are quick to train people for new jobs, and can fill in vital skills gaps.

This is particularly important for the future. **Anthony Carnevale of Georgetown University explicates** that by 2018, there will be a shortage of three million workers with an associate's degree or better. The only way to accommodate for this gap in demand is to increase the amount of students in the system, which free tuition does.

More importantly, it's necessary to understand that technology is rapidly evolving. The prospect of free tuition affords citizens the ability to return to school, acquire newer, more relevant skills, and return to being productive members of the economy.