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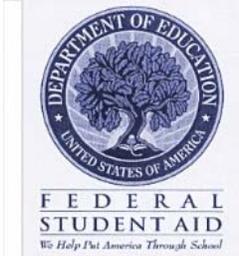
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Student Financial Aid Sending More Money to Wealthy Families

Saturday, January 16, 2010



Public universities are increasingly giving more financial aid to students from relatively wealthy families instead of lower income homes in order to recruit academic achievers and boost the school's reputation. [The Education Trust](#), a nonprofit advocacy group, concluded in its latest [report](#) that public research universities increased aid to students whose parents made at least \$115,000 a year by 28%, to \$361.4 million, from 2003 to 2007.

The result of this shift in financial assistance has been shrinking diversity at some campuses. "It's almost as if some of America's best public colleges have forgotten that they are, in fact, public," said Kati Haycock, president of The Education Trust.

In 1980, the maximum Pell Grant, the primary federal grant program for low-income students, covered 77% of total costs at a four-year public university. Today a Pell Grant only covers 36% of the same costs, forcing low-income students and their families to come up with almost two-thirds of their college expenses.

In 15 of the 22 states The Education Trust examined, the top-ranked private institution had a higher proportion of minority students than the public university. For example, Stanford University was more diverse than the University of California, Berkeley; Harvard University topped the University of Massachusetts Amherst; and Columbia University bested the State University of New York at Buffalo.

-Noel Brinkerhoff

[Top Public Universities Faulted on Financial Aid](#) (by Jenna Johnson, Washington Post)

[Opportunity Adrift](#) (Education Trust) (pdf)

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Perhaps one factor that goes into the decision of who to give scholarships to are the other resources available. Its not simply a prestige thing; students who are not up to par academically require more focus and attention from the school. If public schools have to offer more of these types of basic classes, than they will have to offer fewer specialized ones.

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