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Enrollment Patterns of Students from Low-Income Families



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About the Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on post-secondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Office of Higher Education oversees financial aid programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Program, licensing and an early awareness outreach initiative for youth. Through collaboration with systems and institutions, the agency assists in the development of the state's education technology infrastructure and shared library resources.

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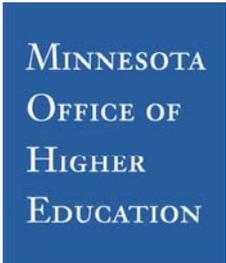
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Executive Summary

This report provides information about postsecondary students in Minnesota who are from lower income families. Low-income students often encounter multiple challenges when it comes to postsecondary education compared to students who are not low income. Challenges may include insufficient academic preparation in K-12, lack of family experience in postsecondary education, lack of financial resources, misperceptions about financial aid and limited support services to assist them in successfully enrolling in and completing college.

Financial aid is available to help low-income students. In particular, the state of Minnesota and the federal government provide grants (which do not have to be repaid) designed to help low- and middle-income students pay for college. However, for many low-income students, the net price they face after subtracting all grants and scholarships is a substantial amount when compared to their annual income.

The analysis in this report investigates recent trends and practices for meeting the needs of these students. It also includes descriptions of initiatives supported by Minnesota postsecondary institutions and the Office of Higher Education. Some of the key findings include:

- Recent research on the growth in the low-income student population and the achievement gap between students of different incomes has brought new attention to the need to improve postsecondary outcomes for low-income students.
- Low-income students, on average, are not as well prepared academically as their peers:
 - Students who were eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch in K-12 schools were much less likely to meet or exceed standards on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment tests than other students. (Eligibility for government school lunch programs is often used as a measure of family income.) Eighty-five percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches failed to meet statewide standards in mathematics.
 - Minnesota students from low-income families scored lower on average in all subject areas of the ACT compared to all Minnesota students. On ACT college readiness benchmarks, fewer than one in five low-income students were academically prepared to succeed in all four subject areas.
- Minnesota undergraduates from low-income families were more likely to attend public two-year institutions than either public or private four-year institutions.
- Thirty-six percent of low-income students from families with annual incomes less than \$30,000 had parents whose highest level of education did not include college. Among students from other income groups, only 15 percent of students had parents whose highest level of education was high school.

- Research indicates that low-income students are more affected by changes in tuition than students from middle- and higher-income families when making decisions about enrolling in college.
- Low- and moderate-income students are disproportionately affected when prices used in the Minnesota State Grant program are lower than the prices students pay to attend. If set too low, students from low- and moderate-income families are expected to pay both an explicit and implicit share of the price. Changing the Recognized Prices to more accurately reflect prices in the marketplace begins to address the problem of having students from low- and moderate-income families financing a larger portion of their education from earnings and borrowing than students from higher-income families attending the same institution.
- Institutions and organizations in Minnesota provide a wide array of ongoing programs and initiatives designed to promote access and success for students from low-income backgrounds.

Introduction

The Minnesota Legislature required the Office of Higher Education to “study and evaluate the enrollment patterns of students from low-income families in higher education.” The language identified several areas for analysis:

This study may include an analysis of high school preparation levels, the enrollment response to available federal and state financial aid, current net costs of attendance relative to family income, and the patterns of family capacity and likelihood to borrow funds for college. The report shall also identify and prepare cost estimates of additional support services students from low-income families require to be successful in college and analyze current efforts at various institutions in the state. The report shall identify potential changes in the state grant program or related aid programs that would increase the participation and success of students from low-income families in higher education in Minnesota.

(Laws of Minnesota, 2008, Chapter 298, Sec. 30)

This report summarizes available data and research on the academic preparation of low-income students, their patterns of enrollment and degree attainment, and higher education costs and financial aid use. It addresses current initiatives and programs targeting low-income students in both public and private postsecondary institutions and the Office of Higher Education. The final section includes an analysis of the State Grant program and its impact on low-income students.

The definition of low income varies from one source of data to another. This report will identify the family incomes included in the definition from each data source where presented in the text.

Low-income Students: Trends in Academic Preparation, Enrollment, Completion and Price

Minnesota citizens, policy makers, parents, and most importantly, students recognize how education provides access to better employment opportunities, to assist citizens in building knowledge and wealth, and to bridge gaps in social and economic outcomes for Minnesotans.

The challenges faced by students in navigating the path to a postsecondary degree are amplified when coupled with economic disadvantages. College for low-income students is too often a place where many fail and few succeed. There are critical steps in the degree attainment process for low-income students: high school academic preparation, enrollment, completion and educational financing. Having better information on how each of these challenges impact students over time can help refine the analysis of higher education programs to best serve the needs of students.

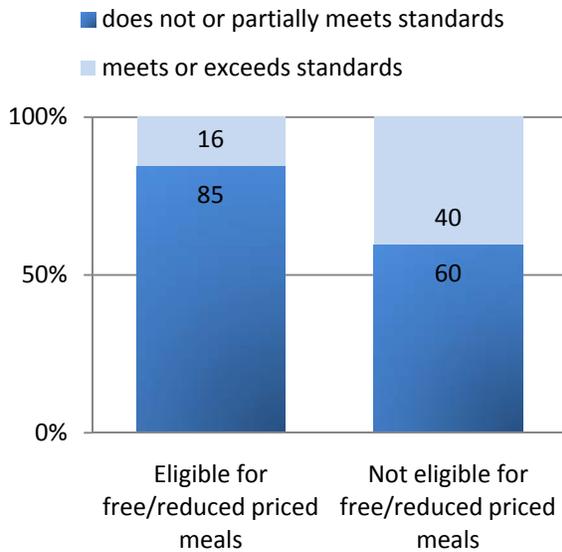
Academic Preparation

One factor in whether a student enrolls and ultimately succeeds in higher education is the student's academic readiness at high school graduation. Analysis of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments allows a comparison using one measure of academic preparation. The MCA exams measure student progress in meeting Minnesota's academic standards for K-12 education. Mathematics and reading exams are given to all public school students in grades 3 through 8, with a reading exam in grade 10 and a math exam in grade 11.

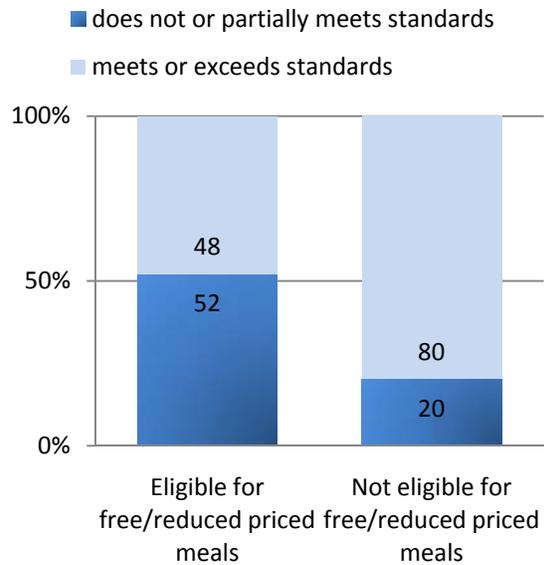
Low-income students, those receiving free or reduced-price lunches¹, were less likely to meet both the math and reading standards than were other students, as the two charts below illustrate. Only 16 percent of low-income students met or partially met the mathematics standard in 11th grade as compared to 40 percent of other students. Similarly, only 48 percent of low-income students met or partially met the reading standard in 10th grade compared to 80 percent of other students. Students who fail to meet the high school graduation standards are also less likely to be prepared for postsecondary-level coursework.

¹ Minnesota uses eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunch as an indicator of low income. During the 2007-2008 school year, 27 percent of the 279,400 students enrolled in Minnesota public high schools (grades 9–12) were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In 2007-2008, students from families of four with incomes of \$38,200 or less were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Source: www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/FNS

**Mathematics Grade 11 MCA 2008
Results
Minnesota Public Schools**



**Reading Grade 10 MCA 2008
Results
Minnesota Public Schools**



Source: Minnesota Department of Education

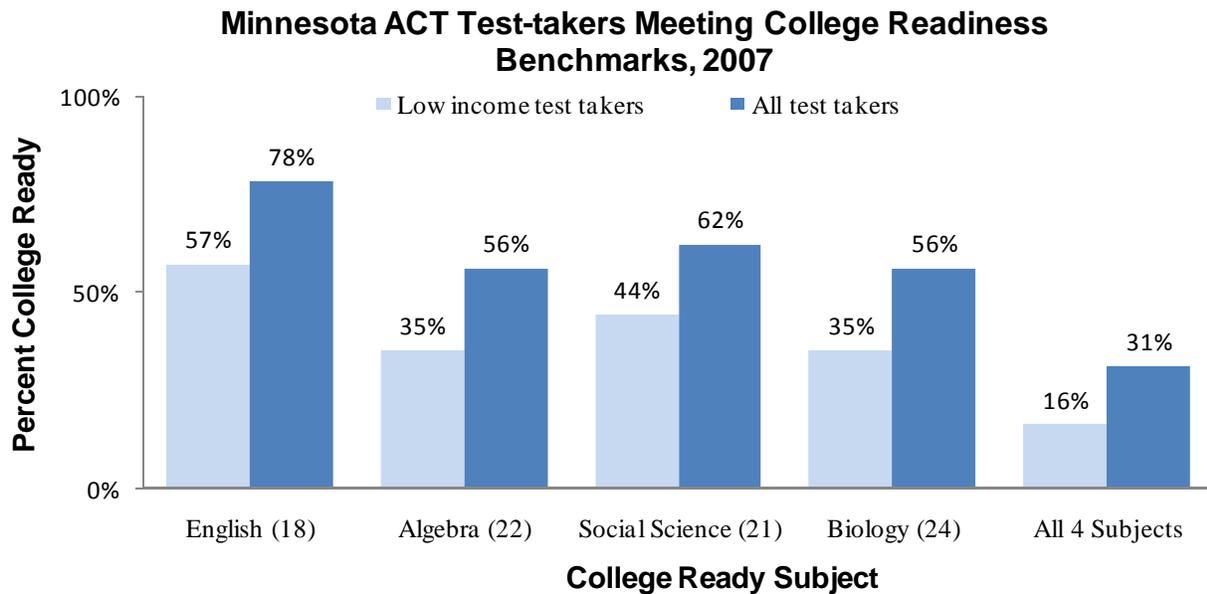
National research suggests that students who take a rigorous high school curriculum increase their chances of successfully completing a college degree (Choy, 2002; Adelman, 2006). Of students who completed curricula with the highest level of academic intensity in high school, 95 percent earned a bachelor’s degree. Forty-one percent went on to complete graduate level degrees (Adelman, 2006). Academic rigor of students’ high school curricula is also strongly associated with college performance and success – college grade point average, the need for remedial coursework in college, and rates of persistence and attainment (Horn et al., 2001).

Another gauge of students’ academic readiness for postsecondary education is performance on national college entrance exams. The ACT is a general multiple-choice exam covering: English, math, reading and science. Seventy percent of Minnesota high school graduates take the ACT.

2007 Mean ACT Scores				
	Minnesota		National	
	Low Income	All Students	Low Income	All Students
English	18.8	21.8	17.6	20.7
Math	20.0	22.5	18.4	21.0
Reading	20.3	22.8	18.7	21.5
Science	20.4	22.5	18.7	21.0
Composite Score	20.0	22.5	18.5	21.2

The mean score for Minnesota students in 2007 was 22.5 out of a possible 36. Only 11 percent of Minnesota ACT test takers were students from low-income families, compared to 17 percent nationally. Minnesota low-income students achieved a composite score of 20.0 – two and a half points lower than the state average. In addition to lower composite scores, lower scores were found for lower-income students in all subject areas within the ACT test.

ACT has also developed college readiness benchmarks in four subject areas: English composition, social science, college algebra, and college biology. Meeting these benchmarks means that the student has a 75 percent chance of earning a grade of ‘C’ or better in related college-level courses. Only 16 percent of Minnesota’s low-income test takers were considered “college ready” in all four subject areas compared to 31 percent of all test takers in Minnesota.



Low-income test takers had an annual family income of less than \$30,000. Eleven percent, or 4,668 test takers were low income. Minimum ACT score needed to meet college readiness shown in parentheses in college subject area.

Source: ACT, Inc., 2008

Postsecondary Enrollment

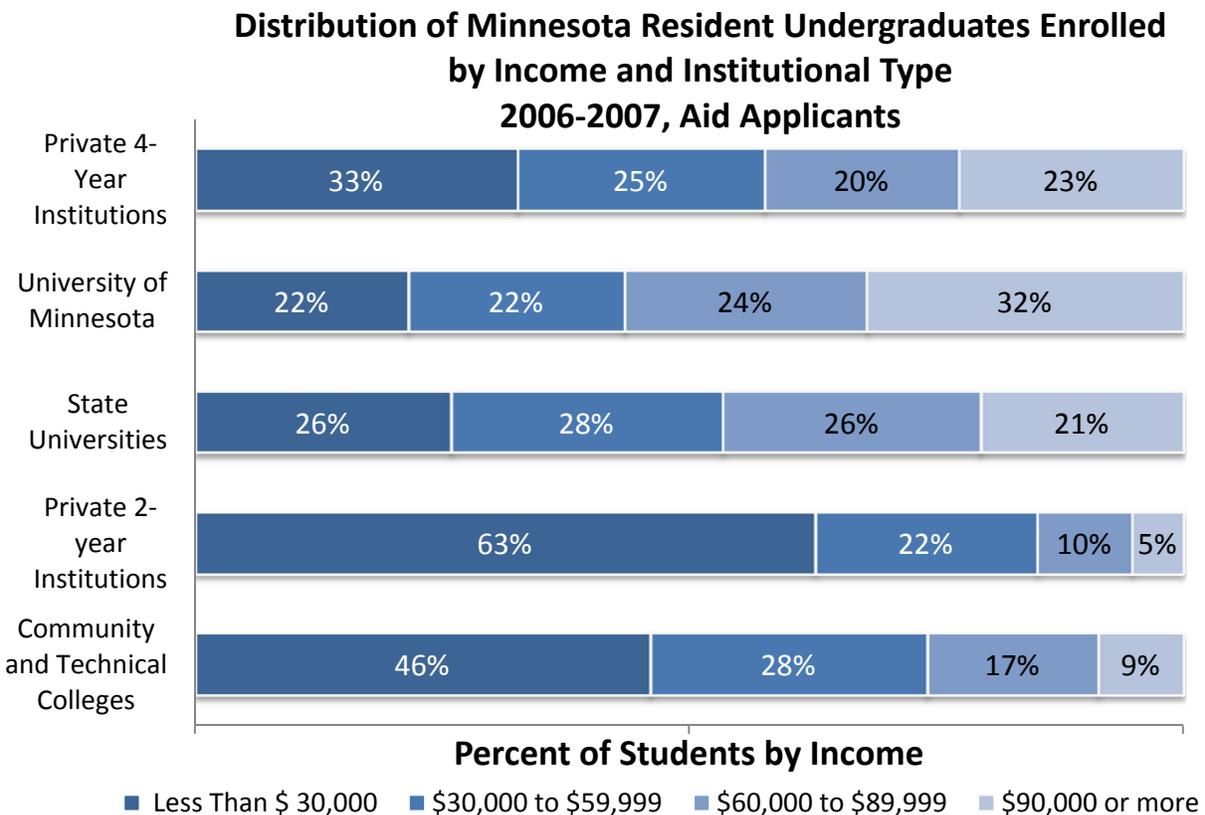
Students make choices about when and how to participate in postsecondary education. These choices affect the student’s chances of persisting and obtaining a degree. The student must decide whether or not to:

- delay enrollment after high school
- work (on or off campus)
- commute to campus, rather than live in a residence hall or close to campus
- attend a two-year rather than a four-year institution
- attend part time rather than full time

These decisions are based on the student’s perception of cost versus their chance of success, affordability, interactions with faculty and involvement in campus organizations and activities. In the *Ensuring Persistence and Degree Completion* report in 2005, John Lee argued that delaying enrollment, working off campus, commuting to campus and attending two-year institutions reduces the chances the student will persist and earn a degree. Furthermore, he said the student’s perception of affordability plays a major role in each of these key decisions.

In a national study of 1992 high school graduates, 94 percent of students from families with less than \$25,000 in annual income planned to pursue postsecondary education. By 1994, only 64 percent had actually enrolled. For students from families with incomes of \$75,000 or more, 99 percent planned to enroll and 93 percent did enroll by 1994 (Choy, 2002, p. 11). Although college access has improved for low-income students, the increase in enrollment by low-income students has not kept pace with the increases by students from higher income backgrounds. While the rate of low-income high school students enrolling in a postsecondary institution has increased from 26 percent in 1972 to 54 percent in 2007, the rate for higher-income students reached 81 percent in 2007 (Engle & O’Brien, 2007).

Family income also has an impact on the type of postsecondary institution a student chooses to attend. Minnesota undergraduates from families with incomes less than \$30,000 were more likely to attend public two-year institutions than public or private four-year institutions. Undergraduates from families with incomes of \$60,000 or more were more likely to attend public or private four-year institutions, as illustrated on the following graph.

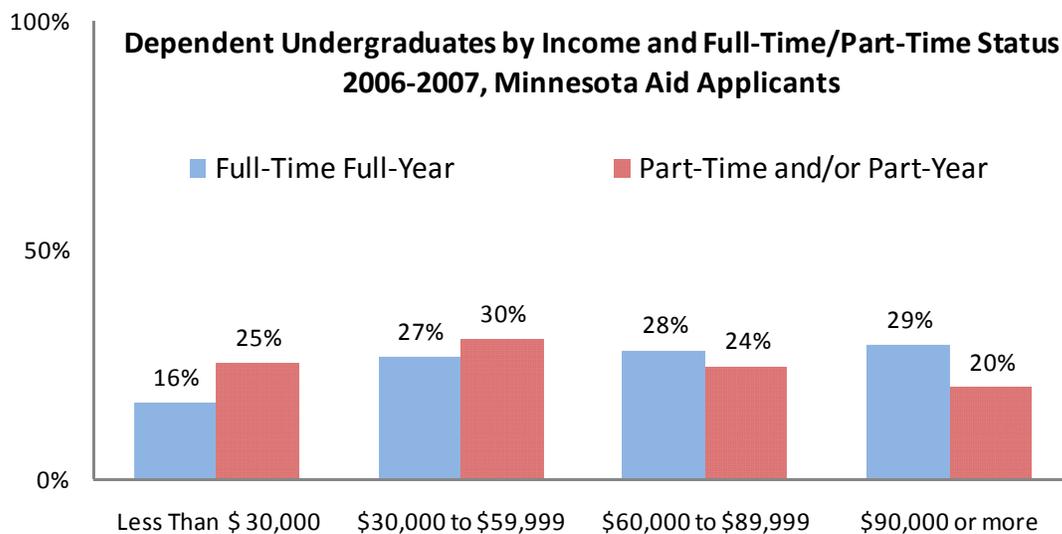


Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Aid Applicants

National research describes the increasing “stratification” of higher education, where an increasing number of low-income students attend two-year as opposed to four-year institutions. Although academic preparation levels may explain some of this difference in enrollment, researchers have found that among groups with similar academic preparation, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to attend four-year institutions than are students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (Cabrera et al., 2005). Data from the Pell Grant program, a federal need-based grant program for low-income students, shows that at its inception in 1973-74, 62 percent of Pell Grant recipients attended four-year institutions; and by 2005-06, the percentage of recipients attending a four-year college had decreased to 45 percent (McHugh Engstrom & Tinto, 2008).

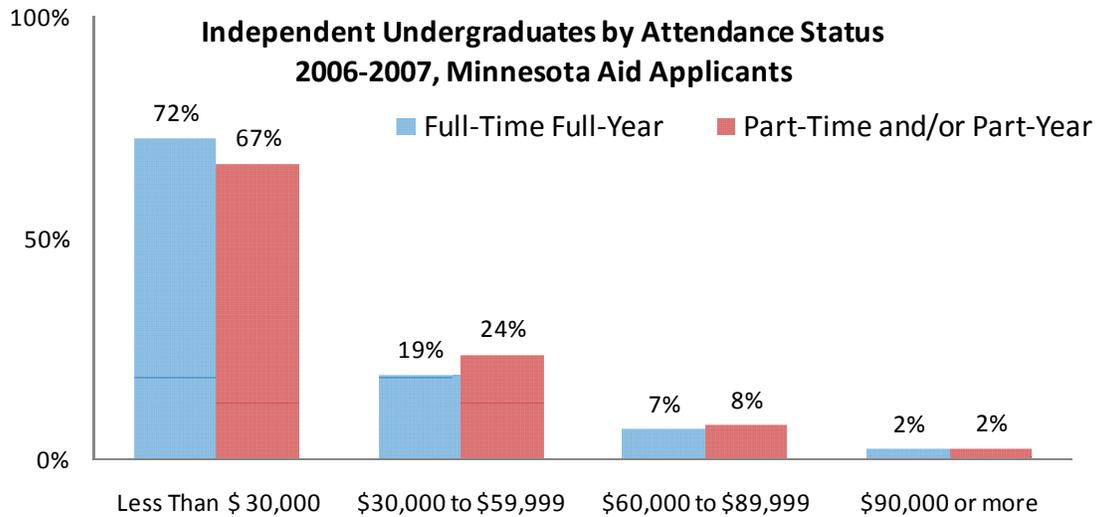
Low-income students are also “considerably less likely to attend college full time than are students from higher-income families and more likely to work full time while attending college” (McHugh Engstrom & Tinto, 2008, p. 2). Both factors decrease the likelihood that the student will successfully complete a bachelor’s degree (Choy, 2002).

Data on Minnesota undergraduates confirms this trend. The graph below shows that 25 percent of dependent undergraduates attending part time were from families with incomes less than \$30,000, as compared to 16 percent for dependent students attending full time. Dependent students attending part time from families with incomes of \$30,000 to \$59,999 comprised 30 percent of all dependent students attending part time, compared to 27 percent of dependent full-time students. Among dependent students from families with incomes of \$60,000 or more, a higher percentage attended full time than part time.



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Aid Applicants

Among independent students, most had incomes of \$30,000 or less. Seventy-two percent of independent part-time students attending full time had incomes of \$30,000 or less, and 67 percent of those attending part-time were in that income category.

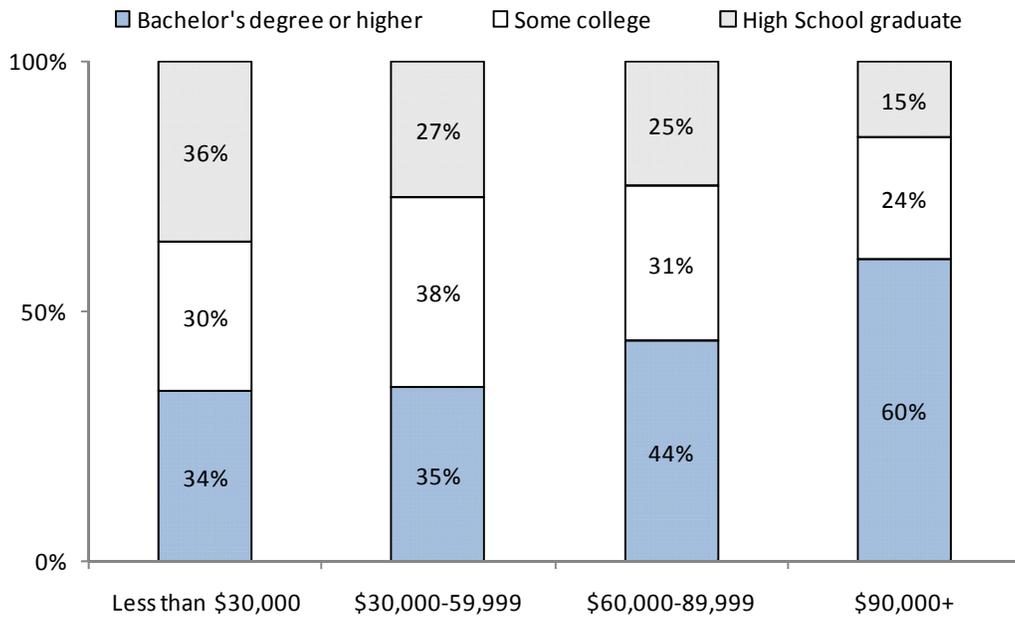


Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Aid Applicants

Parents' level of education has been shown to influence their children's postsecondary options and choices and is correlated with family income. Parents with higher levels of education are generally parents with higher income levels. Low-income students are more likely to have parents whose highest level of education was a high school diploma. One longitudinal study found that a student's likelihood of enrollment at a four-year institution increases with their parent's education level. This occurs for students at every academic level in high school, even for "the most highly qualified" high school seniors (Choy, 2002, p. 13).

The graph below shows that for students enrolled in Minnesota institutions in 2003-2004, parental education increased with income. Thirty-six percent of low-income students, those from families with incomes less than \$30,000, came from families in which their parents' highest level of education was a high school diploma. Comparatively, only 15 percent of students whose family incomes were \$90,000 or higher had parents whose education did not include college. (National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2004, Data Analysis System.)

Minnesota Undergraduates by Highest Level of Parental Education and Income, 2003-2004



Source: National Postsecondary Student Aid Study

Completion: Persistence and Degree Attainment

Nationally, degree completion rates for low-income students have increased from 6 to 12 percent between 1970 and 2005. In comparison, degree completion rates for high-income students rose from 40 to 73 percent over the same period. High-income students are in effect six times more likely to complete a four-year degree (Engle & O’Brien, 2007). Internationally, the U.S. is a leader in college access but not in college completion. The U.S. degree completion rate ranks among the lowest for countries in the annual Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report (OECD 2007).

National studies have examined the issue of persistence for low-income students. A 2002 National Center for Education Statistics report analyzed persistence and completion rates of first-time postsecondary students who received Pell Grants, and how beginning Pell Grant recipients differed from other beginning students in their academic and enrollment characteristics. Pell Grants are targeted to low-income students. Three-quarters of Pell Grant recipients in 2006-2007 had family incomes of less than \$30,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). While some Pell Grant recipients tended to persist at lower rates than non-recipients who attended private, not-for-profit, four-year institutions, few differences were found among those enrolled at public four-year institutions, public two-year institutions, or private for-profit, less-than-four-year institutions.

. . . It appears that Pell Grant recipients have a more difficult time remaining enrolled at private not-for-profit 4-year institutions and private for-profit less-than-4-year institutions if they do not also receive some loan assistance. Among beginning Pell Grant recipients enrolled at private institutions, those who did not also take on a student loan persisted at lower rates than those who did.

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education matched financial aid application data to student enrollment data to track the persistence and characteristics of Minnesota resident undergraduates who apply for student financial aid as well as those who do not apply. The study examined undergraduates who began postsecondary education in 2002-2003 and whether they remained enrolled each year through 2005-2006. (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2008).²

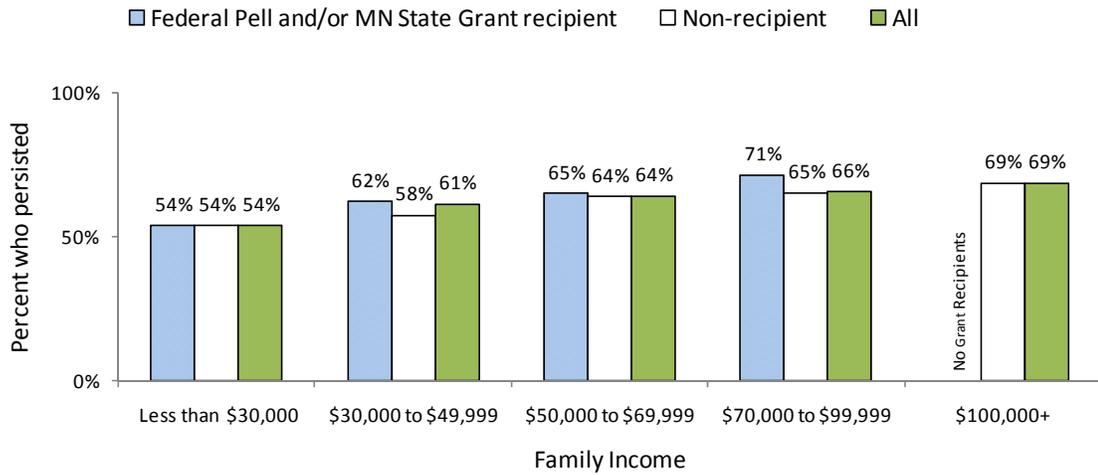
The following graphs indicate the persistence rates for students who attended two-year and four-year institutions by income. The graphs include data only for students who applied for aid. Grant recipients were students who received a federal Pell Grant, a Minnesota State Grant or both.

For students attending two-year institutions (both public and private), persistence increased with income, and students who received grants persisted nearly as well as those who did not receive grants. Among all aid applicants attending two-year institutions, 54 percent of those from families with incomes less than \$30,000 persisted to the second year. Persistence increased with income, rising to 69 percent for those from families with incomes of \$100,000 or more. In examining grant recipients, 54 percent of grant recipients from families with incomes less than \$30,000 persisted to the second year, and persistence increased for students from each income group, reaching 71 percent of the few grant recipients who were from families with incomes of \$70,000 to \$99,999.³ Persistence was similar for students who did not receive grants.

² The Minnesota State Grant database contains student financial aid application data on enrolled students who might be eligible for the Minnesota State Grant and who are enrolled in a State Grant-eligible Minnesota postsecondary institution. Data variables from the 2002-03 Minnesota State Grant database used in this study were the family adjusted gross income of the student and whether the student received any federal Pell Grant or Minnesota State Grant. Students who received any grant were tagged in the student enrollment dataset as “award” students. Students who applied for financial aid, but did not receive either a Federal Pell Grant or Minnesota State Grant were tagged as “applying and not receiving an award” students. Students in the enrollment database where there was not a match in the State Grant database were tagged as “no award” students. Students in the “applying and not receiving an award” group were combined with students in the “no award” group for persistence purposes. Where student family adjusted gross income data are reported it is only available for students who were in the State Grant database; that is, the “award” and “applying and not receiving an award” group.

³ The grant recipients from families with incomes over \$70,000 tend to come from families of 5 persons or more and/or families with large expenses for medical care or child support.

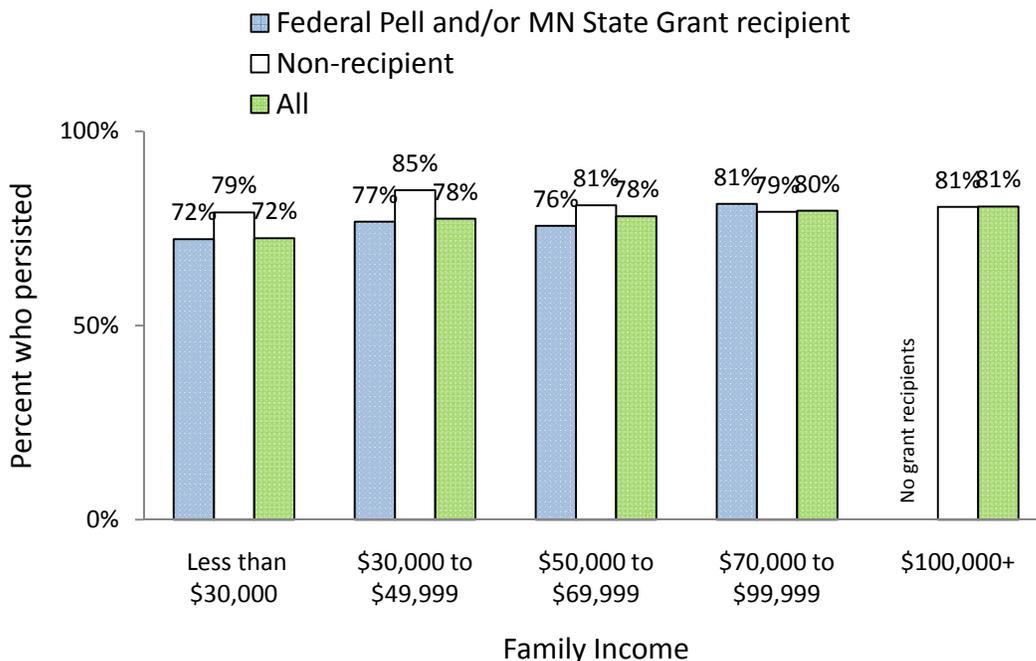
Persistence to the Second Year by Minnesota Undergraduates Attending Two-Year Institutions, 2002-2003 to 2003-2004



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Aid applicants

Persistence rates were better for students attending four-year institutions (both public and private) than for students attending two-year institutions, regardless of family income. Among students at four-year public and private institutions, 72 percent of those from families with incomes less than \$30,000 persisted to the fourth year of enrollment, and persistence increased with income, reaching 81 percent for those from families with incomes of \$100,000 or more. Persistence to the fourth year among grant recipients went from 72 percent for the low income group to 81 percent as income increased and for non-recipients.

Persistence to the 4th Year by Minnesota Undergraduates Attending 4-Year Institutions, 2002-2003 to 2005-2006



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, aid applicants

Data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Survey (BPS:96/01) found that 74 percent of low-income students at four-year institutions completed a degree or were still enrolled after five years compared to 86 percent of higher-income students.⁴ Between the 1989-1990 academic year and the 1995-1996 academic year, the data indicate that low-income students in public four-year institutions increased their likelihood of succeeding indicated by an increase in their five-year persistence and completion rate (Horn & Berger, 2005).

Analysis of the persistence and degree attainment of students with Pell Grants found that Pell Grant recipients tended to have much lower persistence rates because they are much more likely to have one or more of the risk factors for dropping out of postsecondary education (Wei & Horn, 2002). These risk factors were strongly correlated with income, and Pell Grant recipients are likely to come from families with incomes of \$35,000 or less. Pell Grant recipients were more likely to be students who delayed enrollment after high school, attended postsecondary education part time, and worked full time while enrolled. When the analysis controlled for these risk factors, the differences in the rates at which Pell Grant recipients and non-recipients remained enrolled were small.

⁴ Degree completion was calculated separately for dependent and independent students. “Lower” refers to the bottom 25 percent of the income distribution; “Middle” refers to the middle 50 percent; and “High” refers to the upper 25 percent. See U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996/01 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01) for a detailed definition.

One of the risk factors identified is being a “first generation” student or a student whose parents only completed a high school diploma. A study, conducted by the Pell Institute, of students who were both lower-income and first-generation found that nationally these students represented about one-quarter of all undergraduates. These students faced what was called a “double whammy of disadvantage” in persistence and graduation rates. Only 11 percent of low-income first-generation students earned bachelor’s degrees within six years. The completion rate rose to 26 percent for students who were low-income but whose parents attended college or whose parents were higher income but did not attend college. For students whose parents were both higher income and attended college, 55 percent completed a four-year degree (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 12).

Price: Tuition and Financial Aid

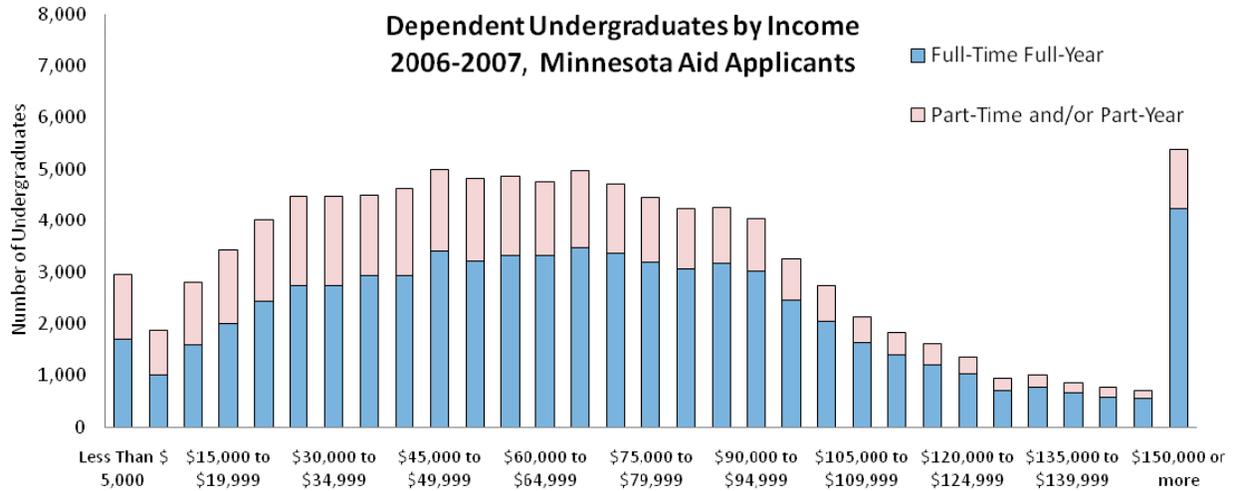
Low-income students are more likely to choose public two-year institutions, in part, because these institutions have the lowest average tuition rates. However, tuition and fees are only part of the costs facing students. There are many non-tuition expenses, such as room and board, transportation, and books, which contribute to the overall student budget, or cost of attendance.

The cost of attendance, or student budget, is the cost basis on which financial aid is determined. The cost of attendance will vary by student according to which institution they attend and where they choose to live. Examining student budgets of low-income students compared to higher-income students can provide insight into the cost choices that low-income students make. Data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2003-2004 found that low-income, dependent Minnesota students had lower student budgets. They also made lower-cost choices than students from higher income families. Much of the variation in student budgets is due to the student’s choice of institution. Low-income students attended lower priced institutions.

Financial aid offers are communicated to students in the form of a “financial aid package” by institutional financial aid offices for students. A financial aid package is a collection of different types of financial aid such as grants and scholarships, work-study earnings and loans. The aid comes from federal, state, institutional, private and other sources. The aid is intended to help students and families fill the gap between their ability to pay and the price of attendance.

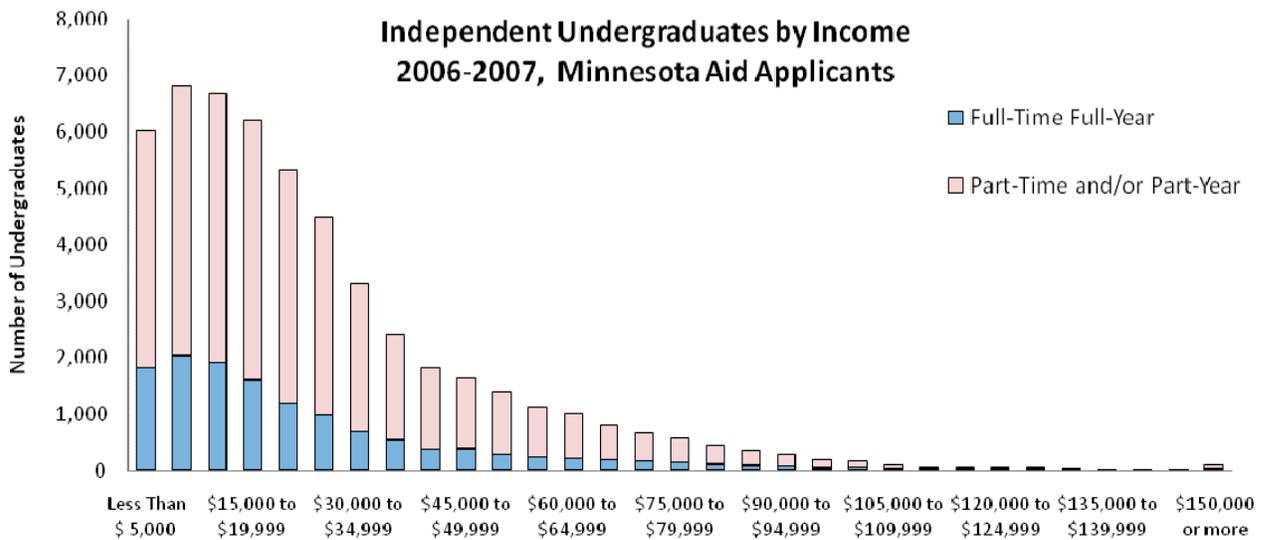
Financial aid differs by family type. The charts below show the income distribution for dependent and independent students. The income distribution for dependent students shows a normal curve in which approximately half the students come from families with incomes above the median income for a Minnesota family of four, which is approximately \$70,000. Most independent students attend part time or for only part of the academic year.

All students are considered either dependent (on their parents) or independent for financial aid purposes	
Dependent students	Independent Students
Are generally traditional age college students and must submit financial information about their parents on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.	meet one or more of the following criteria: are age 24 or older, are a graduate or professional student, married, are a student with legal dependents other than a spouse, are an orphan or ward of the court, or are a veteran of U.S. armed forces or on active service.



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Aid Applicants

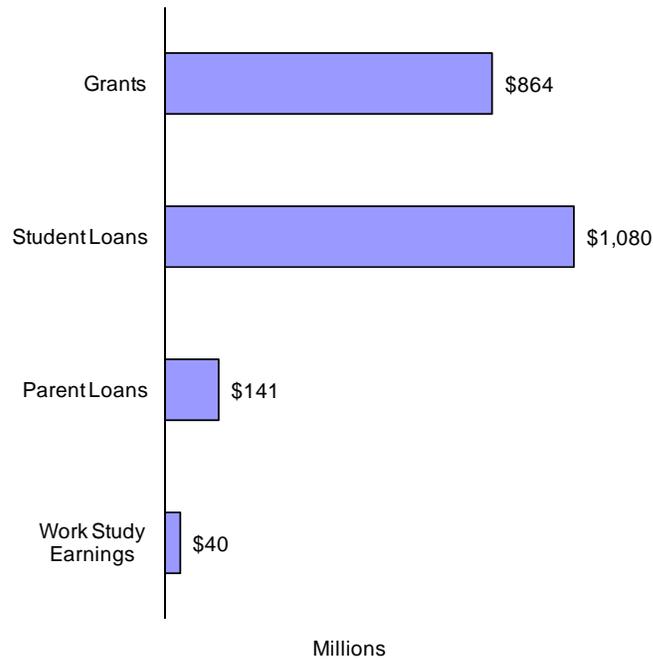
Data for independent students reveal a very different picture. For independent students, most attend part time, and nearly all have incomes below \$65,000.



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Aid Applicants

Minnesota students use a variety of financial aid resources to pay for college. Minnesota students received a total of \$2.12 billion in financial aid in 2006-2007 from state and federal governments, postsecondary institutions and private donors. Minnesota undergraduates received \$864 million in grants and scholarships, \$1.08 billion in student loans, \$141 million in parent loans, and \$40 million in earnings from federal and state work-study jobs. (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2008).

Minnesota Undergraduate Grants, Loans, and Work-Study Earnings, 2006-2007



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education

State Grants: The state of Minnesota invests grant money in low- and moderate-income students, primarily through the Minnesota State Grant Program. Minnesota State Grants totaled \$156 million in 2006-2007. Of the 80,200 Minnesota State Grant recipients in 2006-2007, about 25 percent were from families earning less than \$10,000. About 75 percent were from families earning less than \$40,000.

Minnesota also has several other financial aid programs that provide a limited amount of funding to low-income students. Minnesota Postsecondary Child Care Grants provided \$5.1 million to 2,800 low-income students in 2006-2007. (A full discussion of the Postsecondary Child Care Grant program is included in the section below on Programs for Low-Income Students.) Achieve Scholarships provided \$2.9 million to 2,400 students from families with incomes less than \$75,000 who had taken a college preparatory curriculum in high school. Minnesota Indian Scholarships provided \$1.9 million to 600 American Indian students who were also recipients of federal Pell Grants, Minnesota State Grants, or both in 2007-2008.

Federal Grants: The federal Pell Grant program provided \$179 million to 80,300 undergraduates attending postsecondary institutions in Minnesota in 2006-2007. Students attending public two-year colleges received 43 percent of all Pell grant funding.⁵ Nationally, three-quarters of Pell Grant recipients in 2006-2007 had family incomes less than \$30,000.⁶

The federal government also has several other financial aid programs which provide a limited amount of funding to lower-income students including Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (\$20.6 million to 23,400 Minnesota undergraduates), Academic Competitiveness Grants (\$4.6 million to 5,700 Pell Grant recipients in Minnesota in 2006-2007), and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent grants (\$3.45 million to 1,100 Pell Grant recipients who were in their third or fourth years of college and majored in math, science or certain foreign languages in 2006-2007).

Institutional Grants and Scholarships: Minnesota institutions provided \$416 million in grants to undergraduates in 2006-2007. Criteria for awarding grants vary at each institution. Institutions generally award grants in two categories – means-tested and merit-based. Means-tested grants require that the student show that they have financial need according to their income and assets. Merit-based grants require that students meet some performance criteria such as high school grade point average, score from national college entrance exams, leadership or extracurricular activity participation. Some grants may be awarded on the basis of both income and merit.

Minnesota private four-year institutions provided the largest total amount of grants and scholarships in 2006-2007, with \$331 million. The University of Minnesota provided \$57 million; MnSCU four-year institutions provided \$17 million; private two-year institutions provided \$7 million; and MnSCU two-year institutions provided their students with \$4 million in grants and scholarships. Students attending Minnesota’s not-for-profit institutions received 80 percent of all institutional grants and scholarships.

⁵ Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2007

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, 2007

STUDENT EXAMPLE

Michelle

Public Community College

A 25-year-old independent student without children, with an income of \$17,000 for 2008, and an expected family contribution of \$3,608.

Costs

\$4,838	Tuition and fees
\$7,990	Living expenses* (room and board)

\$12,828 Subtotal

Grants

\$1,081	Pell Grant
\$2,426	Minnesota State Grant

\$3,507 Subtotal grants

\$9,321 Costs minus grants**

* Does not include costs for books, transportation, health care and other expenses.

** Michelle will pay \$9,321 with savings, income or loans for the year.

Approximately 22 percent of Minnesota undergraduates from families with incomes less than \$30,000 who attended public four-year institutions in Minnesota received institutional grants and scholarships in 2003-2004, according to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study. Seventy percent of undergraduates from families with incomes less than \$30,000 who attended Minnesota private colleges received institutional grants and scholarships that year. A little more than one percent of undergraduates attending public two-year institutions who were from families with incomes less than \$30,000 received institutional grants and scholarships. (National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2004, Data Analysis System.)

Work Study: Students can also earn income to pay for attending postsecondary education through work-study jobs, campus jobs and off-campus jobs. Work-study jobs were arranged by postsecondary institutions with subsidies from the federal or state government. Eligibility for a work-study job requires that the student show financial need. About 12,800 students attending Minnesota institutions earned \$19.6 million working in federal work-study jobs in 2006-2007. Approximately 11,900 students earned \$20.0 million working in state work-study jobs in 2006-2007. Earnings by students with federal and state work-study jobs include campus matching funds of at least 25 percent.

Student Loans: In 2006-2007, loans enabled students and their parents to defer paying \$1.22 billion until after the student was no longer attending postsecondary education. Almost half of Minnesota undergraduates had student loans, according to data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey in 2003-2004. The average amounts borrowed were fairly similar across the income categories for dependent students nationally. In Minnesota, however, the average amount borrowed increased with income for dependent students. Low-income students borrowed less, on average, than middle- and upper-income students. (National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, Data Analysis System.)

Independent students have higher annual federal student loan limits, so they borrowed higher average amounts than did dependent students. Independent students at all income levels borrowed at similar rates and similar amounts, on average.

The largest loan programs were the Federal Stafford Loan Programs. The Federal Stafford Loan Program includes subsidized and unsubsidized loans. Students who met a means test could borrow Subsidized Stafford Loans and the federal government paid the interest on their loans while they were attending postsecondary education. Students who did not meet the means test could borrow Unsubsidized Stafford Loans and lenders charged interest on the loans while the student was attending postsecondary education. Approximately \$390 million in federal Subsidized Stafford Loans went to 129,000 Minnesota undergraduates in 2006-2007.

Undergraduates may also obtain loans from private lenders. These loans do not have subsidies for low-income students but are marketed to all students. Interest rates on private loans are usually higher for students with lower credit ratings. Many private loans also require students to have credit-worthy cosigners. Private student loans represented 20 percent of the total amount Minnesota undergraduates borrowed in 2006-2007. Approximately 7 percent of undergraduates from families with incomes less than \$30,000 had private student loans in 2003-2004, and the percentage with private loans increase with income, reaching 13 percent for undergraduates from families with incomes of \$90,000 or more.

In analyzing borrowing behavior of students from families with different incomes, one hypothesis would be that low-income students would borrow more because they have fewer resources. However, the Office of Higher Education examined borrowing behavior in *Factors Related to Undergraduate Borrowing in Minnesota* (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2007). Generally, middle-income students were more likely to borrow than students from low- and higher-income families.

Student borrowing by institution type: About 50 percent of students attending public two-year institutions borrowed in Minnesota. Students at public two-year colleges generally borrowed less than students attending other institution types. While public two-year students face lower overall costs, they also tend to have lower incomes than students at four-year institutions. For students attending public two-year colleges, students at all income levels borrowed at similar rates and similar amounts.

At public four-year institutions, students from middle-income backgrounds tended to borrow the most. Students with incomes in the middle one-third of the income distribution were 3.3 times more likely to borrow than were those with incomes in the lower one-third. Students from other families in the lowest one-third and the highest one-third of the income distribution were equally likely to borrow.

STUDENT EXAMPLE

Robert

University of Minnesota

A dependent student enrolled as a first-time, full-time freshman with a family income of \$25,000 for 2008, and an expected family contribution of zero.

Costs

\$11,293	Tuition and fees
\$7,280	Living expenses* (room and board)

\$18,573 Subtotal

Grants

\$4,731	Pell Grant
\$3,930	Minnesota State Grant
\$750	Federal Academic Competitiveness Grant
\$1,200	Minnesota Achieve Scholarship
\$682	Institutional grants

\$11,293 Subtotal grants

\$7,280 Costs minus grants**

* Does not include costs for books, transportation, health care and other expenses.

** Robert and his family will need to pay \$7,280 with savings, income or loans for the year.

Students attending private, not-for-profit, four-year institutions generally faced higher prices of attendance. Students from middle-income families at these institutions were more likely to borrow. Students from families with incomes in the middle one-third of the income distribution were 2.9 times more likely to borrow than were students with incomes in the lowest one-third. Students from other families in the lowest one-third and the highest one-third of the income distribution were equally likely to borrow.

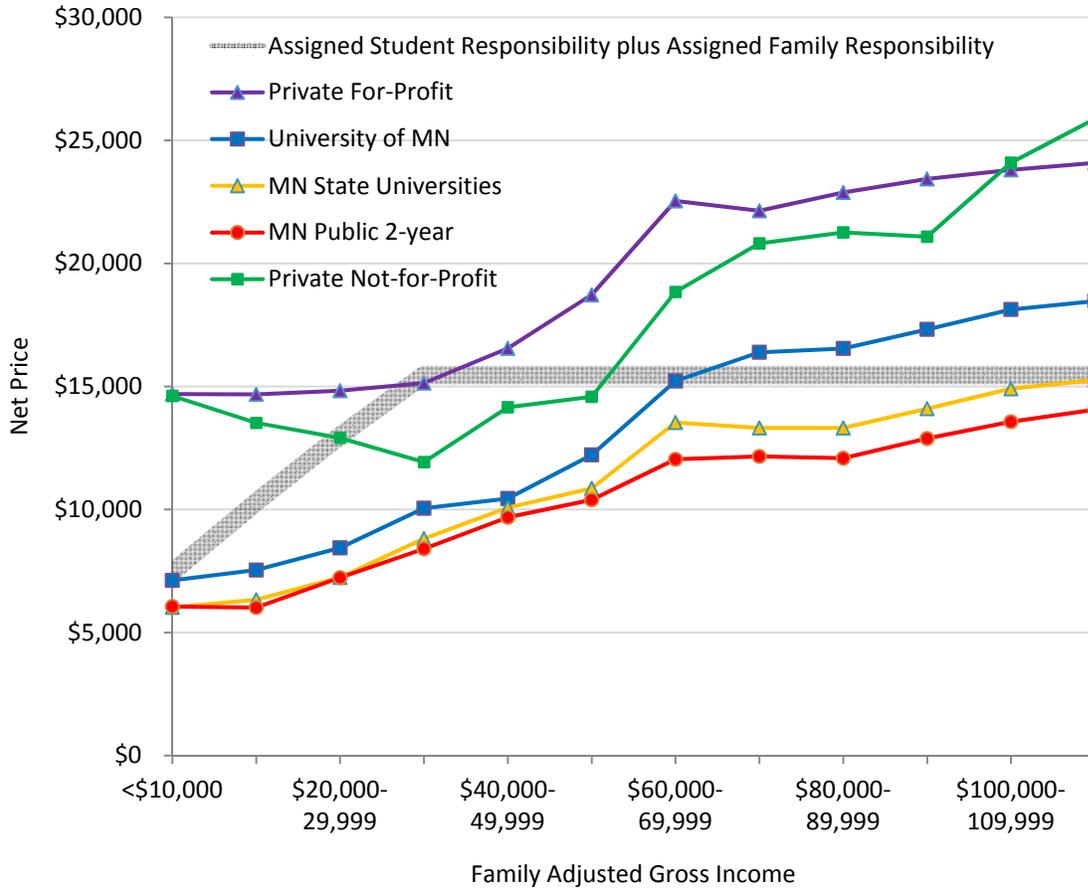
Net price: Many people are concerned about rising tuition and fees for undergraduate students. However, tuition and fees are only part of the costs facing students. There are many non-tuition expenses, such as room and board, transportation and books, which contribute to student budgets, or the price of attendance. The actual cost facing students is the student budget minus all grants. This is referred to as the net price. While grants reduce the overall costs, the net prices remain high.

Lower-income families need a higher percentage of their income to pay for their children's postsecondary education than families at higher income levels.⁷ The 1992 "Ways and Means" survey conducted by the Minnesota Private College Research Foundation confirms that this was the case in the early 1990s as well.

In 2008, the Office of Higher Education published *Higher Education Affordability*, an analysis of net prices paid by undergraduates from different income groups in Minnesota. The study used actual tuition and required fees paid plus a \$10,000 allowance for books, room and board and other expenses of attending to calculate a price of attendance and subtracted all grants and scholarships to arrive at a net price. For dependent students with family incomes of \$30,000 or less, the University of Minnesota net price was about \$8,400 and the private college net price was about \$12,900. While the net price was lower for low-income students than for students at the middle and upper end of the income scale, it was still a substantial portion of family income.

⁷ Minnesota State Grant Review 2008, Minnesota Office of Higher Education

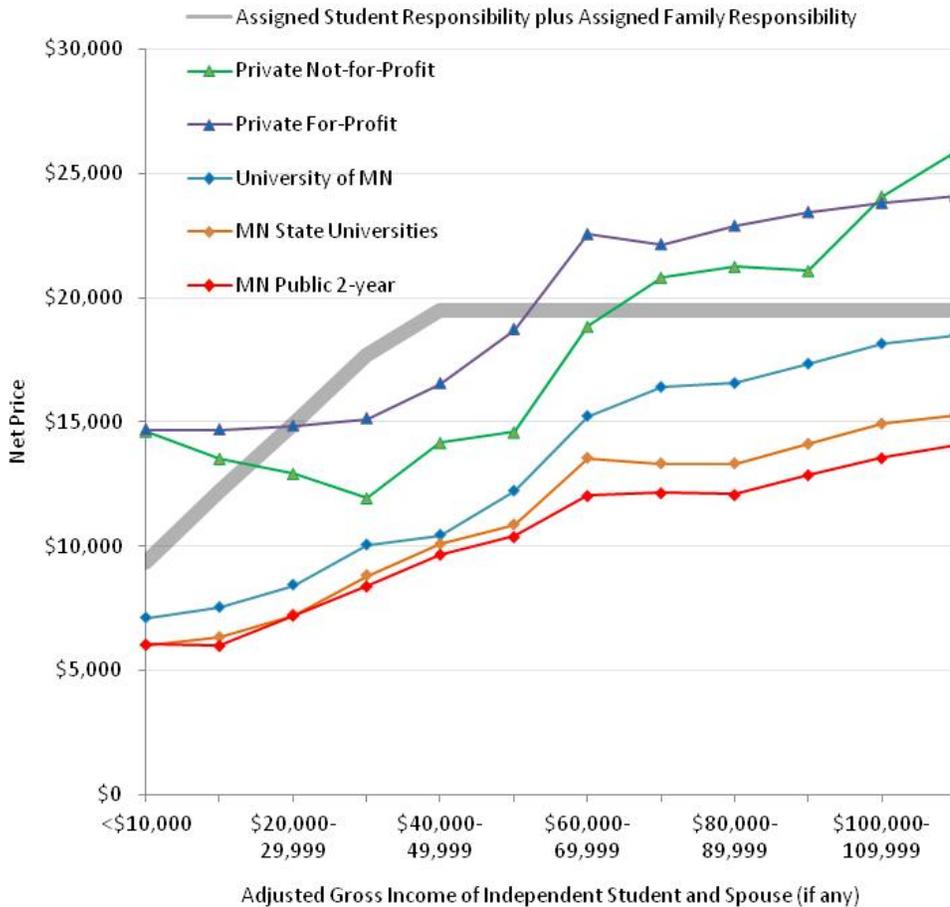
Net Price and Income For Minnesota Dependent Undergraduates, 2006-2007



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education

For single independent students with incomes of \$20,000, net price for public institutions was \$6,000 to \$7,500. For independent students attending private institutions, net price was \$12,900 to \$14,800. Forty-five percent of independent students had annual incomes less than \$20,000. While the net price for students at the lower end of the income scale was less than it was for students from the middle and upper portions of the income scale, it was still a substantial portion of income.

Net Price and Income For Minnesota Independent Undergraduates, 2006-2007



Source: Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Work: Another key source of paying for higher education costs is current income. Eighty-three percent of undergraduates in Minnesota work during the academic year and the percent that work does not vary by income. Students work while enrolled for various reasons, from earning extra cash for education, to gaining valuable experience. However, employment can divert time and energy from studies. (National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, Data Analysis System.)

The Financial Aid Process

The federal government and the state of Minnesota require students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to qualify for governmental financial aid. Unfortunately, some students fail to complete the FAFSA and thus limit their access to federal, state and institutional financial aid.

Overall, Minnesota students tend to apply for aid using the FAFSA at higher levels than the national average. The largest percentage of students who do not apply attend part time and/or part year. Survey data from the U.S. Department of Education estimated that 26 percent of Minnesota undergraduates did not apply for federal financial aid (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2007). The difference in aid application rates varies for students who attend part time compared to those who attend full time. Thirty-seven percent of part-time students did not apply for aid compared to 12 percent of full-time, full-year students. (National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study 2004, Data Analysis System.)

Understanding how to apply for, evaluate and compare information about financial aid is a complicated yet critical step in the college enrollment process, especially for low-income students. In interviews and surveys with students, counselors, parents, community members and policy advocates, Luna De La Rosa and Tierney (2006) identified six challenges in the financial aid process.

The six challenges are:

- Students, in part, make college-related decisions based on their perceptions of financial aid availability;
- A high school’s culture of preparation makes a difference in students’ access to college and financial aid related information;
- Students need accurate and timely information about college and financial aid;
- Group seminars on financial aid information can be helpful in concert with follow-up sessions, but cannot supplant one-on-one counseling;
- Even after applying for college and financial aid, many students require individualized, sustained support throughout the process; and
- Parents require information and knowledge about college and financial aid. (Luna De La Rosa & Tierney, 2006)

STUDENT EXAMPLE

Renee

State University

A dependent student enrolled as a first-time, full-time student with a family income of \$25,000 for 2008, and an expected family contribution of zero.

Costs

\$7,345	Tuition and fees
\$6,024	Living expenses* (room and board)

\$13,369 Subtotal

Grants

\$4,731	Pell Grant
\$1,753	Minnesota State Grant
\$750	Federal Academic Competitiveness Grant
\$1,200	Minnesota Achieve Scholarship

\$8,434 Subtotal grants

\$4,935 Costs minus grants**

* Does not include costs for books, transportation, health care and other expenses.

** Renee and her family are expected to pay \$4,935 with savings, income or loans for the year.

How Students Respond to Price

The impact of the price of attendance on students from low-income families has been investigated extensively over the years so the results are somewhat conclusive, although not completely settled. Four major studies that either summarize earlier reports or use more current data are discussed. Due to the complexity and cost of conducting price-sensitivity research, there are few recent studies from which to draw.

In a study by Larry Leslie and Paul Brinkman in 1987, the focus was not specifically on low-income students, but it is reported here since it is a foundational study for price response generally. This study is a meta-analysis, summarizing 25 prior studies of the relation of price and attendance. This approach is difficult since reporting the results of many studies in a consistent manner is not easily accomplished; however, the approach provides a broad perspective of the possible relationships between price and enrollment. The study focuses on the impact of price changes on 18-24 year old students. The study includes public and private institutions, two- and four-year institutions, and a broad range of data spanning the years 1927 through the 1980s. Given this wide time frame, the data was converted into 1982-83 real tuition prices. The average price response across all the studies was -0.7 percentage points. This means that for every \$100 increase in tuition against a price of \$3,420 in 1983, enrollment rates would be expected to drop by three-quarters of a percentage point. Two other findings from this analysis are important for policy makers:

The more important policy question, however, concerns the relative student sensitivity to tuition on the one hand versus price minus aid on the other. In the final analysis student aid may be viewed as a reduction in net price that is conceptually the same as a tuition reduction. Yet, students do not appear, from most (although not all) studies, to act as though this were true. One explanation is that at the time students exhibit price taking behavior, i.e., make the attendance decision, they often do not know how much aid will be received. (Leslie and Brinkman, 1987, p. 196)

Lower tuitions are, of course, subsidies provided to everyone, whereas need-based student aid is more restrictive: therefore, per dollar of subsidy, aid programs, if carefully administered, should be more effective than lower tuition aid policies if the goal is to improve access. (Leslie and Brinkman, 1987, p. 198)

The second study, by Thomas Kane in 1994, addressed the impact of price on students. This paper focuses on the response of Black 18-19 year-old high school graduates to determine sensitivity to costs. All of the relevant variables that might also influence enrollment are considered. For Black students recently graduating from high school Kane finds that a \$1,000 increase in the net direct costs of college was associated with a five percentage point decline in the likelihood of college enrollment. (Kane, 1994, p. 892)

The results are more dramatic when evaluated across income levels. Families were grouped into four distinct levels starting with the incomes of the lowest 25 percent to those with the highest 25 percent of incomes. The analysis estimates the impact on enrollment rates of 18-19 year-old high school graduates from a \$1,000 increase in net costs.

Three points are clear. First, Black students are much more responsive to price changes than are white students. At the lowest income quartile, the rate is 8.5 percentage points for Blacks versus 4.6 for whites. Second, the response is similar for Black students regardless of income. The rates in each class exceed 8.0 percentage points. Third, the rates drop materially by income for white students. Low-income white students are almost four times as responsive to price changes as are high-income white students. Finally Kane has two comments similar to Leslie and Brinkman's. A change in financial aid is not viewed by recipients as equivalent to an opposite change in tuition. (Kane, 1994, p. 895) Second, if the goal is promoting enrollment by lower-income students, targeted instruments such as means-tested grants may be preferred over tuition changes. (Kane, 1994, p. 907)

The third study by McPherson and Shapiro in 1991 used time series data. Because of the limitations in the data the authors used, they were limited to reporting results only for white students. The authors found that "Increases in net cost lead to lower enrollment for the lower income group and ... that this effect is smaller for middle and upper income students" (McPherson and Shapiro, 1991, p. 313). They also concluded that: The negative coefficient on net cost implies that for a lower income student a \$100 net cost increase results in an enrollment decline of about .68 percentage points which is a 2.2 percent decline. (McPherson and Shapiro, 1991, p. 314)

The fourth paper by Keane and Wolpin pursued questions from an earlier work by E.P St. John on enrollment response to price. The paper focused more on the amount of funds provided by parents for postsecondary education than other aspects of the enrollment decision. This study was reviewed because the capacity to transfer funds to children is related to family income. St. John found that

STUDENT EXAMPLE

Mohamed

Private 4-year college

A dependent student enrolled as a first-time, full-time freshman with a family income of \$25,000 for 2008, and an expected family contribution of zero.

Costs

\$27,419	Tuition and fees
\$7,612	Living expenses* (room and board)

\$35,031 Subtotal

Grants

\$4,731	Pell Grant
\$3,930	Minnesota State Grant
\$750	Federal Academic Competitiveness Grant
\$1,200	Minnesota Achieve Scholarship
\$10,437	Institutional grants***

\$21,048 Subtotal grants

\$13,983 Costs minus grants**

* Does not include costs for books, transportation, health care and other expenses.

** Mohamed and his family need to pay \$13,983 with savings, income or loans for the year.

***This is an average for private colleges. Grant amounts vary widely.

an increase of \$100 in tuition (in 1982-83 dollars) lowers the enrollment rate by roughly .85 percentage points. But for families with incomes below \$40,000, the reduction in enrollment was 1.1 percentage points whereas for families above that level the reduction was much smaller at 0.4 percentage points. The response rate for students from low-income families is nearly three times the response rate for those from higher income families. The Keane and Wolpin study confirmed this relationship.

These studies confirm the finding that lower-income students tend to be significantly more sensitive to price changes in higher education than are students from middle- and high-income families. The studies span many years and report data in terms of real dollars from an earlier time period. Current tuition rates are much higher now than in 1983. Further analysis is needed to answer fully the question about the empirical impact of the price of attendance on lower-income students today.

Programs for Low-Income Students

Studies analyzing the challenges and services for low-income students show consistency in their recommendations. The recommendations from the Engle & Tinto study include increasing academic preparation and college awareness for high school students, increasing financial aid, smoothing the transition to college with targeted programming, facilitating transfer to four-year institutions, and encouraging student engagement on campus, including enhancing on-campus work study opportunities (Engle & Tinto, 2008, pp. 27-29).

A study of low-income students who attended large, public four-year institutions in high numbers by Engle & O'Brien identified best practices for achieving high graduation rates. Best practices of successful institutions included the utilization of "first responders to students' needs" among faculty and staff to help students navigate large institutions; promoting high student engagement levels in campus activities; developing strong first-year curricular and developmental experiences; improving the instructional quality and limiting class size in introductory courses; having advising and early warning systems to monitor student progress coupled with substantive academic and social support services; promoting retention through a specific institutional commitment and a dedicated leadership position or office; and developing programs specific to low-income students and using data to analyze and inform these practices (Engle & O'Brien, 2006, pp. 3-4; 39-42). These targeted best practices were shown to bridge the difficulties low-income students can face from a range of related factors, such as not being able to afford fee-based services, not having access to services at convenient times for working and/or commuting students, and a general lack of awareness of what targeted services are available or how to utilize them (Engle & O'Brien, 2006, pp. 44-46). Although these best practices benefitted students across income levels, programs designed specifically according to the needs of low-income students had the greatest effectiveness for that population.

Gandara and Bial (2001) found that the most effective college preparatory programs appear capable of at least doubling the college-going rate of participants for high school students. The pre-college programs that appeared to be most effective had the following elements in common:

- *Providing a key person who monitors and guides the students over a long period of time—a "mentor", program director, faculty member, or guidance counselor. Studies are not clear on which of these is most effective.*
- *Providing high-quality instruction through access to the most challenging courses offered by the school ("untracking"), through special coursework that supports and augments the regular curricular offerings (tutoring and specially designed classes), or by revamping the curriculum to better address the learning needs of the students.*
- *Making long-term investments in students rather than short-term interventions. The longer students were in the program, the more likely they were reported to benefit from it.*
- *Paying attention to the cultural background of students. Many programs reported having greater success with one group of students than another; it is likely that background and expertise of the staff and directors helped them to make cultural connections with students.*

- *Providing a peer group that supports students' academic aspirations as well as giving them social and emotional support.*
- *Providing financial assistance and incentives. Financial assistance is important for access to academic leveling experiences – college visits and SAT preparation courses – as well as to monetary support to make college a realistic possibility for some students. Scholarships and grant assistance make the difference between going to college or not for many low-income students (Thomas, 1998; St. John, 1990). (Gandara & Bial, 2001)*

Analysis of programs for low-income students suggests a need to address the multiplicity of factors related to student access and success, and that the interaction of these factors and analysis of various program aspects is complex. Further study and identification of desirable outcomes for measuring programmatic successes can enhance these efforts (Ramsey, 2008), as well as implementation of the best practices identified by larger research studies.

Programs in Minnesota

Programs for low-income students across Minnesota represent varying interventions and models, size of populations, levels of support, funding levels and outcomes. While the multitude of available programs represents a challenge in communicating to students and families how to access assistance, the variety of programs does allow students to find a program tailored to their needs. Not all students will require all the support functions that these programs provide, but the presence of such a diverse network of programs to assist students is representative of Minnesota's commitment to students and should be viewed as a rich repository of resources for Minnesota's low-income students.

Minnesota P-16 Partnership: The Partnership brings together leaders of the state's higher education systems, K-12 organizations and associations, governmental agencies, non-profits and business organizations to create a seamless educational system that begins in early childhood and extends to the completion of postsecondary education. Over the next two years, University of Minnesota President Robert H. Bruininks will serve as chair of the Partnership. During that time, a major priority for the partnership will be aligning Minnesota's K-12 standards and assessments with the knowledge and skills that are needed to succeed in college.

The following section presents information gathered from the postsecondary education sector in Minnesota on programs they offer that are targeted to low-income students, both in terms of financial aid and other student support programs. Some groups of institutions provided information on programs in the aggregate. Others presented their efforts at the programmatic level.⁸ Many of the programs reported are highly decentralized or cross multiple institutions, making detailed information analysis more difficult. Where available, cost information, both estimates and actual budget amounts, is provided.

⁸ The Minnesota Career College Association was contacted for this report; although they do not have programs or tracking information for particular groups of students, including lower-income students, their institutions offer a range of support and advising services that promote access and success for their students.

University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota has a wide range of programs across their campuses that promote access and success for low-income students.

“If education is the key to success and fulfillment in this society, as I believe it is, we cannot live up to our democratic ideals without ensuring that talented people from every income level, every neighborhood, and every kind of background can find a place at the University.... Diversity will continue to be a central goal for this University, and it will continue to infuse and shape this institution with energy and the power of broadened perspectives.”

—University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks⁹

A total of 8,000 low-income (Pell grant recipients) undergraduate students were enrolled at the University of Minnesota in Fiscal Year 2007, accounting for 17 percent of all University undergraduate students.

Key programs serving low-income students are listed below. Many of the programs include components that serve all students, but provide particular assistance to low-income students. The list of programs is not exhaustive but highlights key efforts at the university. The full list of programs is listed in Appendix A of this report. Due to the decentralized nature of the programs, cost information was not available in the aggregate; it is provided where available.

Access and Outreach Programs

U Connects: The U Connects program is a university-community partnership designed to connect young people and their mentors with the university by providing tickets and access to university educational programs, cultural activities and theater, music and athletic events. The mentors not only accompany youth to the activities, but also help them critically think about and learn from the experience. For example, after attending a Shakespearean play, mentors helped youth explore the play’s themes and examine the plot.

College Readiness Consortium: The Consortium works in close partnership with preK-12 schools and districts, other institutions of higher education, community organizations, government agencies, families and students. In its first two years of existence, the Consortium has made progress on a number of important fronts, such as:

- Launching the Minnesota Principals Academy, an executive development program designed to help school leaders create and sustain high-performing schools that put every student on the path to college readiness.
- Creating the Bridge to Higher Learning, the result of work with the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, to articulate a vision for aligning high

⁹ University of Minnesota, Office for Equity and Diversity. *REIMAGINING EQUITY AND DIVERSITY A Framework for Transforming the University of Minnesota*. www.academic.umn.edu/equity/pdf/OEDVisionDoc_spreads.pdf

school academics with college readiness, to become focused on every student earning a credential or degree at a postsecondary education institution.

- Ramp-Up to Readiness will be another cornerstone of the Consortium's work. Ramp-Up will guide students through a research-based sequence of courses, experiences and activities from grades 7-12 that help students develop the knowledge, skills and habits they need to succeed in college and other forms of postsecondary education. In doing so, the project will increase both the number and diversity of Minnesota students who graduate from high school ready for college-level work without remediation.

Scholarship Programs

Founders Scholarships: The University of Minnesota Founders Free Tuition Program, begun in fall 2005, guarantees grant and gift assistance in an amount at least equal to tuition and required fees on each university campus for all incoming freshman and transfer University of Minnesota students who are Minnesota residents and who are eligible for federal Pell grants. Recent University experience shows that two-thirds of students from families earning less than \$50,000 per year were eligible for a Pell grant. The University of Minnesota Founders Free Tuition Program commitment will be fulfilled with federal, state, and university grants.

To be eligible, students must enroll full time, taking at least 13 credits a semester, in a baccalaureate degree program; additionally, students must be enrolling for the first time at the University and working on their first undergraduate degree. Students who enter the University as new freshmen are eligible to be considered for up to four years of support under the University of Minnesota Founders Free Tuition Program. When fully implemented, it is estimated that the program will benefit more than 4,200 University students per year.

The Puckett Scholars Program: The Puckett program was created in 1994 and provides scholarships to the University of Minnesota for students of color who graduate from Minnesota high schools. The scholarship award is \$4,000 for the first year, renewable annually for up to four years. To encourage academic progress, the University assigns each Scholar a mentor for general guidance and support.

Persistence Programs

Access to Success: The mission of the Access to Success Program is to help ensure the academic success of its participants. It is designed for a cohort of freshmen in various colleges (such as Education, Liberal Arts, and Food, Agriculture and Natural Sciences) whose experiences and high school records indicate strong potential for success but whose high school rank and test scores may not meet the typical profile of admitted students. Students participate in programs during their freshman year specifically designed to strengthen their academic skills and promote their academic achievement. Participants will also benefit from: a variety of support services, such as individually tailored academic advising, mentoring, and tutoring services; services offered by University offices such as SMART Learning Commons and the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence; and course instruction that utilizes small classes, personal attention, and other features designed to support and encourage their success.

The Program also offers a number of other services that address the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and characteristics, including urban students, first-generation college students, student parents, students with disabilities, students of color, older students, and non-native speakers of English. The CLA budget for the program for Fiscal Year 2009 is \$223,300, and 59 percent of students in the program were eligible for Pell grants.

Bridge to Academic Excellence: This summer program is designed specifically for students who have little or no experience of how college or university systems operate. Students come to campus in the summer prior to their first fall semester, to learn more about campus and enroll in classes, and assure a successful transition to college.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

Access and Opportunity is a strategic direction of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees. Access and opportunity defines the Board's commitment to providing higher education access and opportunity to all Minnesotans, especially those who have been traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. MnSCU defines underrepresented as:

- First generation students,
- Low-income students (Pell Grant recipients), and/or
- Students of color.

"The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system educates 64 percent of the state's undergraduates and served more than 32,800 students of color in 2007. The system's Board of Trustees recognizes that recruiting and retaining students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education is critical to the state's economic future. Leaders of the 32 state universities, community colleges and technical colleges are committed to providing a welcoming environment that can help all students succeed."

-Dr. James H. McCormick, Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

A total of 98,000 underrepresented undergraduate students were enrolled at a MnSCU institution in Fiscal Year 2007, accounting for 42.1 percent of all MnSCU undergraduate enrollments as shown in the table below. Low-income undergraduates made up nearly a quarter of all students enrolled at MnSCU institutions in Fiscal Year 2007.

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Underrepresented Undergraduate Students
Fiscal Year 2007**

	Number	Percent
Generation		
Not First Generation	130,159	55.8
First Generation	49,670	21.3
Unknown	53,492	22.9
Total	233,321	100.0
Income		
Not Low Income	176,876	75.8
Low Income	56,445	24.2
Total	233,321	100.0
Race Ethnicity		
Not Students of Color	182,630	78.3
Students of Color	32,412	13.9
Unknown	18,279	7.8
Total	233,321	100.0
Summary		
Not Underrepresented	135,110	57.9
Underrepresented	98,211	42.1
Total	233,321	100.0

Source: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

Underrepresented Student Program Services and Initiatives

The Minnesota State Colleges and University system's diversity-oriented academic support services focus primarily on underrepresented students. Such programs include:

- TRIO Programs
- Access and Opportunity Centers
- Educational Talent Search
- Upward Bound
- Disability Services

A total of \$21.32 million was spent on MnSCU diversity-oriented academic support efforts in Fiscal Year 2007. MnSCU diversity-oriented cultural support services may focus on a specific underserved student population, but participation in such programs and services is not limited to underserved populations. Examples of diversity-oriented cultural support services on MnSCU campuses include:

- Asian Center
- Latino Center
- African American Center
- Native American Center
- Cultural Diversity Center
- IMPACT

A total of \$7.90 million was spent on Minnesota State Colleges and Universities diversity-oriented cultural support efforts in Fiscal Year 2007. In addition, MnSCU institutions provide a variety of academic assistance and student services available to all students, such as tutoring, writing centers, math labs, career development centers and counseling, to name a few.

Underrepresented Student Persistence and Completion

MnSCU defines persistence and completion rates as “the percent of fall entering full-time undergraduate students who are retained at the same college or university, have graduated from that college or university or have transferred to another college or university by the second fall term after entry.” In general, persistence and completion rates of underrepresented students have been less than those of not underrepresented students at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Second fall persistence and completion rates of underrepresented students at MnSCU are shown in the following table.

**Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Second Fall Persistence and Completion Rates of
Underrepresented Students**

Term	First Generation	Not First Generation	Lower income	Not Lower Income	Students of Color	Not Students of Color
Fall 2001			71.1%	77.2%	66.7%	77.2%
Fall 2002			71.1%	77.6%	65.7%	77.1%
Fall 2003	72.2%	76.7%	70.3%	77.5%	64.6%	76.8%
Fall 2004	71.9%	75.8%	69.3%	77.0%	66.2%	75.7%
Fall 2005	71.0%	76.6%	69.2%	77.5%	64.2%	76.8%
Fall 2006	71.1%	76.9%	69.0%	78.5%	65.5%	77.2%

Source: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

The MnSCU accounting system does not track expenditures by whether a student is underrepresented or not. Nevertheless, MnSCU staff estimated \$30.6 million was spent on recruiting and retaining underrepresented students at MnSCU institutions in Fiscal Year 2007. MnSCU staff estimated \$468 was spent on recruiting and \$534 was spent on retaining each underrepresented full-year-equivalent enrollment for Fiscal Year 2007.

Power of You

The Power of You program was designed to increase postsecondary participation and success for lower-income and students of color graduating from Minneapolis and St. Paul public high schools. It promises high school graduates financial assistance that covers tuition and required fees for two years of education at St. Paul College, Minneapolis Community and Technical College or Metropolitan State University with specialized curricula and student support services. For the 2006 fall enrollment, 58 percent of Power of You students were eligible for the maximum Pell Grant award, which covered their tuition and fees. The remaining students received State Grants, based on need, and privately funded scholarships. At Minneapolis Community and Technical College, 76 percent were students of color. At both colleges,

enrollment has increased for both low-income students and students of color since the program began. In addition, Power of You participants had higher persistence and cumulative grade point averages in the second year (Schultz & Mueller, 2007).

Other Institutional Aid

Many Minnesota state colleges and universities provide need-based aid to students through their respective foundations. Examples of these programs are listed in Appendix B. The system also supports ISEEK, an online college and career information system for prospective college students.

Minnesota Private Colleges

The current initiatives at Minnesota's private colleges designed to assist students from low-income backgrounds are varied and numerous.

“Since they were founded, Minnesota’s private nonprofit colleges have opened wide the doors of opportunity to low-income students earning undergraduate degrees. This has been part of our commitment for more than 150 years, with succeeding waves of immigrants coming to our institutions. Offering significant scholarships and personal supports, private colleges today enroll the same share of low-income students as the public systems. Private college enrollment of low-income students is particularly important right now: The number of high school and college graduates in Minnesota is beginning to fall, at a time when our economy will require more college graduates, not fewer. The best way forward is to help more students of low-income families succeed in secondary school and then earn a college degree.”

—Minnesota Private College Council President David B. Laird, Jr.

A total of 10,000 low-income (Pell Grant recipients) undergraduate students were enrolled at private colleges and universities in Minnesota in Fiscal Year 2007, accounting for 20 percent of all private college undergraduate enrollments.

A total of 13,500 low-income (Pell Grant recipients) undergraduate students were enrolled at private career schools in Minnesota in Fiscal Year 2007, accounting for 47 percent of all private career school undergraduate enrollments.

A multitude of programs exist at private college targeting or impacting low-income students. Program categories are described below, and specific details on the programmatic initiatives at each private, non-profit institution are listed in Appendix C of this report. Cost information is provided where available.

Improving academic preparation and performance in K-12: Private colleges partner with multiple organizations to assist low-income students in improving their academic performance in school. These programs reinforce school-based instruction through tutoring, mentoring, after-school programming and special activities for all age groups. Example programs are: Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) with St. Paul Public Schools; Tutoring and Outreach at area public schools.

Creating partnerships with other educational, non-profit or community organizations benefitting low-income neighborhoods or groups: Private colleges partner with other organizations such as local school districts, non-profit college transition programs and community centers to provide services directly to low-income students and community residents. These programs offer tutoring, mentoring, after-school programming, and special activities for all age groups reinforcing needs identified by the partnering organization. Example programs are: the PLUS Time program at Concordia University and Homework 'n Hoops Program by the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

Improving the transition of students from high school to college: Private colleges often work directly with high schools and other non-profit organizations to provide assistance with college planning, preparation, and enrollment for lower-income students to improve the transition of students from high school to college. These programs may offer standardized test preparation, financial aid application assistance, college search assistance and mentoring. Example programs are: the Fast Forward Youth Program at the College of St. Benedict and Saint John's University and the Modesta Reichert Gamble First Step Summer Institute at the College of St. Catherine.

Providing financial assistance to enroll in and attend college: Financial assistance to lower-income students is available at most private colleges. In addition, private colleges may partner with corporations, foundations, and other grant-making entities to provide more targeted scholarship dollars to lower-income students. Example programs are: Augsburg College Access Program and the Augsburg Promise Grant and Building Opportunities for Leadership Development Scholarship Program at Concordia University.

Increasing the number of students in targeted fields or occupations: Several colleges have instituted programs seeking to draw more lower-income students into a high demand field or occupation where they are underrepresented. Current program initiatives seek to increase enrollment and degree completion in fields such as science (biology, chemistry), technology, engineering, health sciences, mathematics (statistics), education, and other areas that are prevalent at the state's private colleges. An example is the Encouraging Interdisciplinary Learning in Science, Math, and Computing program at the College of St. Scholastica.

Improving the persistence and completion of students in postsecondary education/student success in college: Programming targeted at improving persistence and completion for low-income students at private colleges. These programs may include mentoring, student outreach, and academic assistance. An example is the Wal-Mart Initiative for Success in Education (WISE) at the College of St. Scholastica.

All-encompassing programs: Private colleges also partner with other organizations to offer programs encompassing all the components listed above. These programs often represent a multi-year commitment by the college as resources are utilized to improve academic preparation, facilitate the high school-to-college transition, provide financial assistance, and improve student persistence and completion for all students within a single program structure. Example programs are: TRIO programs and Admission Possible.

Minnesota Department of Education

The Department of Education expanded opportunities for students to take Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and tests with supplemental funding beginning in 2005. The cost of taking the year-end tests, the passage of which may qualify students to earn college credit, is subsidized for students.

The department, in collaboration with the Legislature and educators, has begun to establish new, rigorous high school graduation criteria.

The Department of Education houses the Minnesota Career Information System, which is an online tool used by schools across the state to help students link career interests with college options.

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

College Preparation and Access Programs

The Office of Higher Education administers several programs that work with schools serving high proportions of students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education. These programs support preparation for enrollment in and successful completion of postsecondary programs.

Get Ready is an early intervention, early college awareness program in which the Office of Higher Education outreach staff work with students from families underrepresented in college and provide them with the tools and experiences that will help motivate and prepare them to complete high school and pursue postsecondary education. The program is designed to improve the pre-college preparation and college success rate of low-income students. The Get Ready program has two core components that are offered at no cost to participating schools and organizations; all curriculum materials are provided.

- **Direct Service:** This component provides Get Ready curriculum, one-on-one academic advising, tutoring, pre-college activities, and parent college awareness events led by Get Ready staff. During the 2008-2009 school year, Get Ready staff worked with fourth through 10th grade students in 11 pre-selected Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools. The 10th grade students are part of a cohort that will receive Get Ready services through 12th grade.

- **Outreach Minnesota:** This component provides the Get Ready curriculum and some pre-college activities (such as college visits) to non-direct service schools and organizations in which more than half the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Other factors such as geographic location and diversity are also taken into consideration.

The Get Ready program is partially funded through a federal GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant. The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is the state grantee for GEAR UP. The agency originally secured a GEAR UP competitive five-year grant in 1999 to establish the Get Ready program in Minnesota. The grant was then reauthorized for one additional year. In August 2005, the agency was awarded another six-year GEAR UP grant which runs through August 2011. The current annual Get Ready/GEAR UP budget is comprised of \$2,500,000 in federal funds and \$2,785,048 in support from other sources.

The Intervention for College Attendance Program provides competitive grants to educational institutions and nonprofit organizations with programs focusing on increasing high school graduation, college participation and success rates. The grants fund programs statewide for students in grades 6 through 12 and in college. Each grant brings its own customized approach to the group of students it serves. The grants support large and small programs. Some grantees are local initiatives serving rural targeted groups, while other grantees are affiliated with national college readiness programs. Grants for Fiscal Year 2008 range in amount from: \$8,000-\$40,950. A list of grant recipients for the 2008-2009 funding cycle can be found on the Minnesota Office of Higher Education Web site: www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=941.

I Make It Happen is a collaborative initiative to increase college participation and success rates of students from groups traditionally underrepresented in college. The program provides students in grades 7 through 9 with messages and information that will help them prepare for and pursue college. *I Make It Happen* features a Web site and on-line school counselor available for questions. In fall 2008, the program showcased a “Power to the Eighth” play with follow-up classes for middle school students in Twin Cities schools and targeted schools in greater Minnesota. The play focuses on actions and classes eighth graders can and should take to optimize future opportunities to successfully attend a postsecondary institution after high school.

The Advising and Counseling for College Program is designed to provide innovative advising and college counseling programs to increase enrollment and success in rigorous high school courses and subsequent attendance and success at postsecondary institutions by Minnesota students. A total of \$1.8 million was awarded to 23 school sites as matching grants to help primarily ninth-grade students successfully plan and prepare for postsecondary education. Preference was given to schools that are underserved and schools serving high proportions of students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education, including low-income students, first generation students, and students of color. Program strategies vary from one grantee to another. Some sites are providing more one-on-one academic counseling to students or using student advisory groups; some are engaging students in new activities including advanced courses, career exploration, mentoring and campus visits; and others are adopting new web-based planning and advising tools. The 23 projects are funded from April 2008 to June 30, 2009.

Federal College Access Challenge Grant was authorized in 2007 as part of a \$66 million provision of the federal Omnibus Higher Education Act to improve college access. Minnesota's grant for the first year is \$735,000. The grant is targeted specifically to schools serving large numbers of low-income students and students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Minnesota will use the funding to encourage high school students to be ready academically, socially and financially for college. There are three parts to Minnesota's college-readiness initiative:

Naviance Counseling Software for Minnesota Schools

- The grant will support the software licensing, purchasing, installation and staff training for 300 secondary schools not currently using a comprehensive online counseling software program. New developments in online counseling software enable educators to evaluate student progress; communicate with students and parents in real time; review transcripts; give students access to planning tools and personal checklists; and to identify and address student academic problems in an expedient and systematic way.

Professional Development for Counselors

- For schools already using Naviance online student records and counseling tools, the grant will support the creation of user groups and expanded training for more staff and for use of additional features of the software.
- The grant will support professional development opportunities for counselors to increase their understanding and use of comprehensive guidance programs and effective new methods to guide students toward postsecondary readiness and completion. With the large and growing caseloads for school counselors across the state, counselors will strengthen their capacity to work effectively with teachers to reach all students with clear and consistent college planning assistance.
- The grant will support regional workshops held by the Minnesota Department of Education for counselors and educators to increase their understanding and use of data collected through school testing.

Community Outreach

- The grant will fund new training for educators, community leaders, counselors and others to build their capacity to present college access material to families across the state. With a focus on low-income communities, presentations will be developed in English and other languages to ensure parents understand college and financial aid opportunities.
- Financial aid events will be hosted in targeted communities to support college preparation and educate parents on the financial aid process.

Financial Aid Programs

Minnesota State Grant Program

The state of Minnesota invests grant money in low-and moderate-income students, primarily through the Minnesota State Grant Program. Minnesota State Grant spending totaled \$156 million in 2007. Of the 80,200 Minnesota State Grant recipients in Fiscal Year 2007, about 25 percent of Minnesota State Grant recipients were from families earning less than \$10,000. About 75 percent were from families earning less than \$40,000.

The purpose of the Minnesota State Grant Program is defined in Minnesota Statutes 136A.095:

The legislature finds and declares that the identification of men and women of the state who are economically disadvantaged and the encouragement of their educational development in eligible institutions of their choosing are in the best interests of the state and of the students.

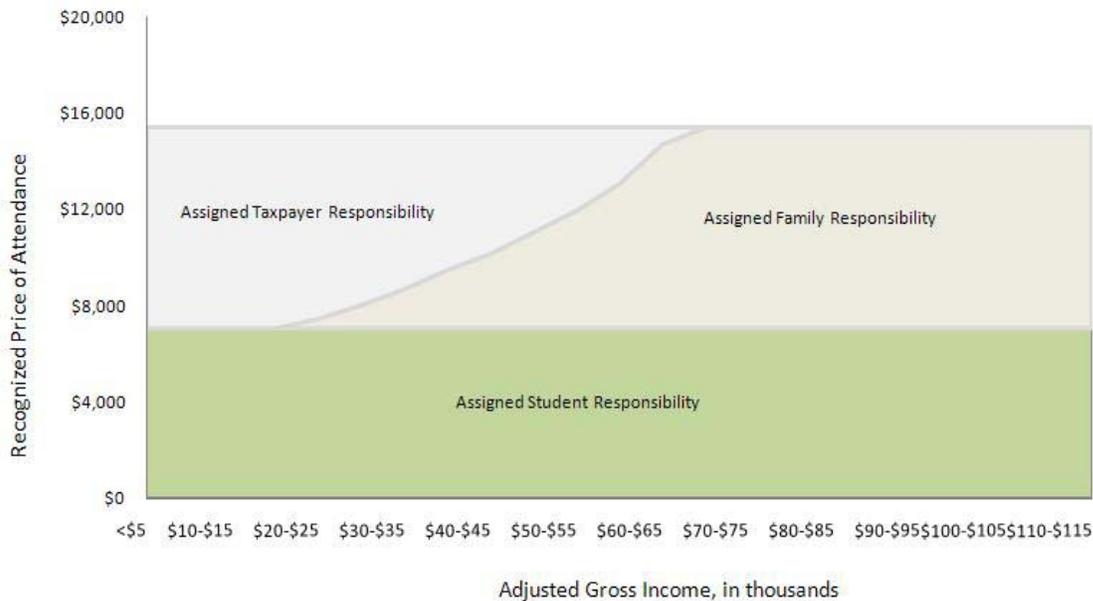
Economically disadvantaged is not defined in Statute.

The Design for Shared Responsibility provides the policy foundations for the Minnesota State Grant Program. The policy distributes the price of undergraduate postsecondary education among students, families, and, if necessary, taxpayers. When adopted, the Design for Shared Responsibility targeted more aid to students from low-income families than had been prior state policy practice. In its *Report to the Governor and 1985 Legislature*, the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board noted the following:

Over time several inequities had developed in the old policy. As a result, students from lower income families found it necessary to finance a larger portion of their education costs from savings, work or loans than students from higher income families attending the same institution. This resulted from several arbitrary award caps and other rationing techniques used in response to insufficient funding (pp. 58-59).

The Design for Shared Responsibility distributed the Recognized Price of Attendance for resident undergraduates at the University of Minnesota in Fiscal Year 2007 as shown on the graph below. The University of Minnesota Fiscal Year 2007 Recognized Price of Attendance was selected for purposes of illustration only. Recognized Prices of Attendance are lower for students attending Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and are similar, but generally higher, for students attending private institutions. For all students, however, the Recognized Price of Attendance is distributed in a manner in keeping with what is shown in the following graph.

**Design for Shared Responsibility
University of Minnesota Fiscal Year 2007
Distribution of the Recognized Price of Attendance**



Minnesota State Grant Payment Assignments: The Design for Shared Responsibility starts with Recognized Prices of Attendance and distributes prices to students, families, and, if necessary, taxpayers.

Recognized Prices of Attendance: Recognized Prices of Attendance used in the Minnesota State Grant program are the sum of tuition and fees, or tuition maximums, and a standard living and miscellaneous expense allowance determined in law. *Minnesota Statutes* 136A.121, Subd. 6, specifies the prices to be used in the Minnesota State Grant program as:

. . . allowances specified in law for living and miscellaneous expenses, and an allowance for tuition and fees equal to the lesser of the average tuition and fees charged by the institution, or the tuition and fee maximums established in law.

Minnesota’s statutory definition of price allows for multiple Recognized Prices of Attendance, based on students’ choice of institution and registration level. For students attending less than full time, the Recognized Prices of Attendance used in the Minnesota State Grant program are prorated to reflect the prices associated with as few as three semester credits or the equivalent.

Assigned Student Responsibilities: Students are assigned the first responsibility for paying for their education, regardless of their economic and family circumstances. Students benefit from education through increased human capital and are expected to invest in themselves before others are expected to help. Assigning financial responsibility to students first is similar to a venture capitalist requiring entrepreneurs to invest in their own projects before providing capital.

The practice also parallels lenders requiring home buyers to provide a down payment before writing a mortgage.

The Design for Shared Responsibility defines an explicit Assigned Student Responsibility; it does not specify a dollar amount or a percent of price. Specific Assigned Student Responsibilities are set in law and current state practice sets them at 46 percent of the Recognized Prices of Attendance. Ultimately, students determine their Assigned Student Responsibilities by the choices they make about where to attend (lower- or higher-priced institutions) and the size of their registration loads (full-time or part-time attendance).

Assigned Family/Taxpayer Responsibilities: Families are assigned financial responsibilities next. Families are defined as follows in determining the family portion of Assigned Family/Taxpayer Responsibilities used in the Minnesota State Grant Program:

1. Parents of dependent students
2. Students who are independent and married, with children
3. Students who are independent and not married, with children
4. Students who are independent and married, with no children
5. Students who are independent and not married, with no children

Families are assessed payment responsibility based on a measure of their ability to pay. Assigned Family Responsibilities are determined through the assessment of family income and net worth. Families first report income and net worth to the federal government on the Free Application for Federal Student Financial Aid (FAFSA). The federal government uses an assessment tool called the Federal Need Analysis to determine an amount a family is expected to pay for postsecondary education. The Federal Need Analysis makes adjustments to income and net worth for family size. Assessment rates inside the Federal Need Analysis are similar for families with children (numbers 1-3 in the above list) and higher for families who do not have children (numbers 4 and 5 in the above list).

Minnesota uses the definitions and rates in the Federal Need Analysis, but does not accept the dollar amount results in determining Assigned Family Responsibilities. Minnesota assigns 96 percent of the federal results to parents of dependent students, 86 percent of the federal results to independent students with dependents, and 68 percent to independent students with no dependents other than a spouse. These percentages were established over time by the Legislature in Minnesota Law as the Federal Need Analysis results for families came to be viewed as too high. Some families are expected to cover the entire Assigned Family/Taxpayer Responsibilities, even after Minnesota's adjustments to the results of the Federal Need Analysis. For other families, the expected dollar amount covers only some of the Assigned Family/Taxpayer Responsibilities. Finally, some families are expected to contribute nothing.

Taxpayers provide assistance through Assigned Taxpayer Responsibilities only in cases where the full Assigned Family/Taxpayer Responsibilities are not covered by what is expected from families. Where taxpayers are expected to help, Minnesota leverages federal tax dollars (Federal Pell Grants) by counting federal dollars first. Any remaining Recognized Price of Attendance is paid for with state tax dollars (Minnesota State Grants). As such, the Design for Shared

Responsibility fully assigns the Recognized Prices of Attendance to students and to families and/or taxpayers.

Assigned Student Responsibilities in Practice: The Design for Shared Responsibility was intended to address the problem of students from low- and moderate-income families having to finance a larger portion of their education from earnings or borrowing than students from higher-income families attending the same institution. In adopting the Design for Shared Responsibility in 1982, the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board sought to

. . . control the amount the student is expected to contribute, primarily through work and borrowing, and ensure that this expectation is the same for all students attending the same cost institution (p.2).

The Board's position, subsequently adopted by Minnesota's Legislature and Governor, built on the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (1979) position:

. . . that an explicit self-help component is an important aspect of developing in students a sense of responsibility for their own advancement and of encouraging a more astutely sensed necessity for prudent use of time and money (p.6).

An earnings and/or borrowing standard continued to be used by staff at the Coordinating Board and its successor agencies in analyzing Assigned Student Responsibilities. The analytic question has been and continues to be, how much work, how much borrowing, and how much work and borrowing combined is required of students to pay for Assigned Student Responsibilities at various Recognized Prices of Attendance?

Students have been sheltered from the full Recognized Price of Attendance increases by assigning a portion of price to either families, who are judged to have an ability to pay, or to taxpayers, if necessary. Nevertheless, as the Recognized Prices of Attendance have increased, so have the dollar amounts expected of students at each Assigned Student Responsibility. Office of Higher Education analyses have consistently shown it is possible for students to earn, borrow or combine earning and borrowing to pay for the Assigned Student Responsibilities based on the price established in law by the Legislature and Governor (2008).

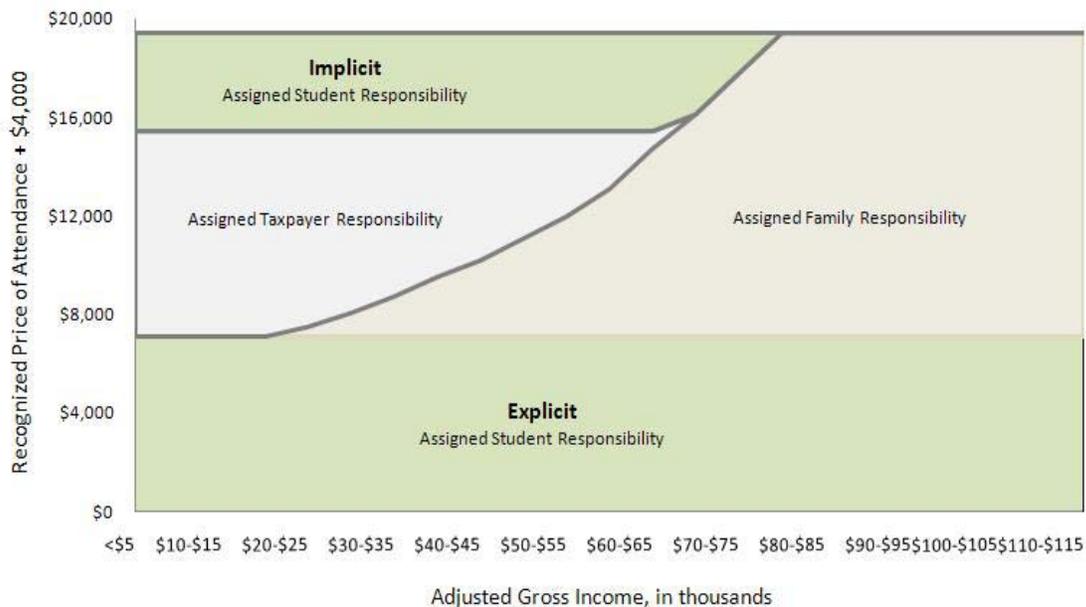
These analyses are called into question, however, if the Recognized Price of Attendance established in law understates the price students face in the marketplace. Tuition and fees, tuition maximums, and/or a living and miscellaneous expenses allowance set at below what students are required to pay for postsecondary education result in artificially lower Assigned Student Responsibilities. By definition, below market Recognized Prices of Attendance and the resulting below market Assigned Student Responsibilities are easier to pay for than market priced Assigned Student Responsibilities.

Recognized Price of Attendance set below what students are required to pay for college disproportionately affect students from low- and moderate-income families. Any remaining Recognized Price of Attendance implicitly falls to students from low- to moderate-income families since there is either no dollar amount expected from families or the expected dollar

amount is less than the full Assigned Family/Taxpayer Responsibility. Lower Recognized Prices of Attendance constrain Minnesota State Grants for students from low- and moderate-income families who would otherwise qualify.

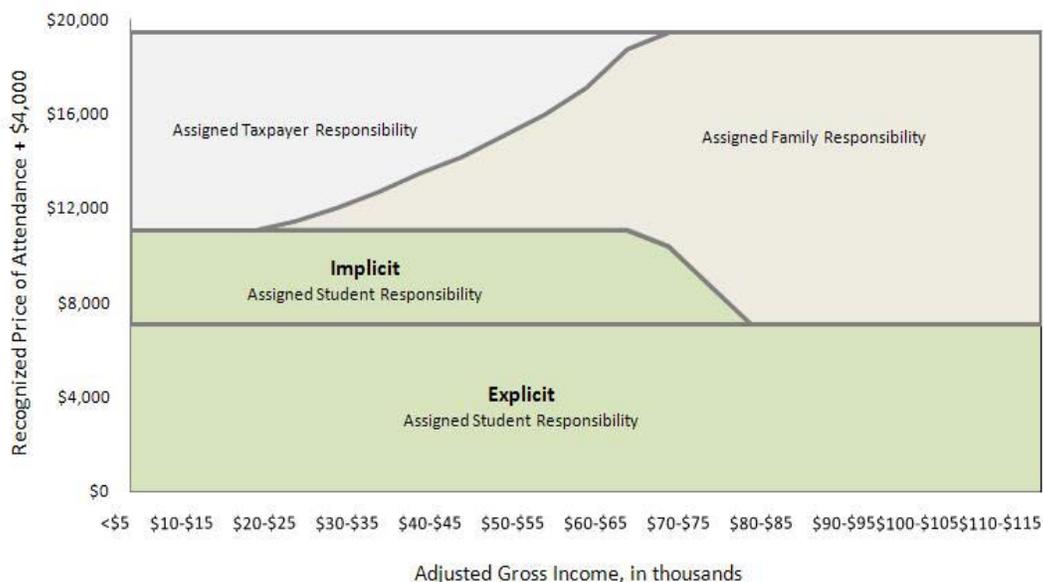
To illustrate the distributional consequences of lower Recognized Price of Attendance, the following chart adds \$4,000 to the University of Minnesota Recognized Price of Attendance graph shown on page 3. The added \$4,000, not accounted for in the Recognized Price of Attendance, results in an additional Implicit Assigned Student Responsibility for students from lower and moderate-income families, as shown in the upper left corner of the following graph.

**Design for Shared Responsibility
University of Minnesota Fiscal Year 2007
Distribution of the Recognized Price of Attendance +\$4,000**



A variable student share is the result of setting Assigned Student Responsibilities in the Minnesota State Grant program below what students face in the marketplace. Students from low- and moderate-income families have greater financial responsibility than students from families with higher incomes. A variable student share resulting from setting the Recognized Prices of Attendance below what students face in the marketplace is highlighted in the following alternative graph.

**Design for Shared Responsibility
University of Minnesota Fiscal Year 2007
Distribution of the Recognized Price of Attendance +\$4,000**



The Design for Shared Responsibility is dynamic in assigning prices. The model distributes prices. It does not set prices. If the Recognized Prices of Attendance are too low, students from low- and moderate-income families will have an explicit Assigned Student Responsibility as well as an implicit Assigned Student Responsibility as shown in the chart above. Price setting is the responsibility of the Legislature and the Governor under Minnesota Statutes 136A.121, Subd. 6. By setting the Recognized Prices of Attendance equal to actual prices in the marketplace, lawmakers would begin to address the current problem of students from low- and moderate-income families financing a larger portion of their education from earnings and borrowing than students from higher-income families attending the same institution.

Discussion: The Office of Higher Education conducted a Minnesota State Grant review process throughout the summer of 2008. The process brought together Office of Higher Education staff with staff from the legislature, institutions, student groups, and employers. Office staff heard one consistent message: the Recognized Prices of Attendance used in the Minnesota State Grant program are too low.

If the Recognized Prices of Attendance are too low, students from low- and moderate-income families may not be able to earn or borrow sufficiently to finance Assigned Student Responsibilities with both an explicit and an implicit expectation. Empirical analysis of what is required of students to earn or borrow to pay Assigned Student Responsibilities at the prices students face in the marketplace could inform discussion about the Minnesota State Grant program.

Modifying the student, family, or taxpayer parameters of the Minnesota State Grant program, however, will not rectify an underlying price-setting problem within the State Grant program. A solution first requires the Legislature and the Governor to establish realistic Recognized Prices of Attendance followed by an empirical assessment of what is required to meet the resulting Assigned Student and Assigned Family Responsibilities. When realistic prices are established and recognized in the Minnesota State Grant program, empirical analysis can provide policymakers the data for assessing the reasonableness of what is financially expected of students and families at all income levels.

Other State Financial Aid Programs

In addition to the Minnesota State Grant program, the Office of Higher Education administers two other financial aid programs that promote access and success for postsecondary students, including students from low-income backgrounds: the Minnesota State Work Study Program and the Postsecondary Child Care Grant Program. The state of Minnesota also initiated the Minnesota Achieve Scholarship program beginning on January 1, 2008. The program provides scholarships to financially needy high school graduates who have completed rigorous coursework.

The Minnesota State Work-Study Program is designed to assist students in meeting their financial need, to provide students with valuable work experiences, and to provide non-profit service agencies, handicapped persons, and persons over 65 with lower cost student assistance. Institutions award the funds based on financial need. Students must be paid at least minimum wages, and institutions or employers may set wages above the minimum rate.

In Fiscal Year 2007, 11,900 students were awarded \$14.8 million through the State Work-Study Program. The average award amount for students was \$1,239.

Postsecondary Child Care Grant Program is a state-funded grant program that assists students who need help in paying the costs of child care in order to attend postsecondary education. The program provides financial assistance to students who have children 12 and under, are not receiving assistance under the Minnesota Family Investment Program, and demonstrate financial need. The grants help pay for child care while the student pursues a postsecondary degree, diploma, or certificate. The award is based upon the income of the student and his or her spouse, the size of the applicant's family, the number of eligible children within the family who need child care, and the applicant's level of enrollment. Students must be enrolled at least half time or six credits per term.

The maximum award amount is \$2,600 per eligible child per academic year. Students from families with incomes up to 130 percent of federal poverty guidelines who attend full time are eligible for the maximum award per child. Students with higher incomes and those attending part time receive less than \$2,600. The amount of the award cannot exceed 40 hours of child care per week per eligible child, and the institution may increase the amount shown on the maximum award chart by 10 percent for infant care in certain counties. In Fiscal Year 2007, 2,800 students were awarded \$5.1 million through the Postsecondary Child Care Grant Program. The average award for Fiscal Year 2007 was \$1,800.

In 2000, the Office of Higher Education did an evaluation of the Postsecondary Child Care Grant program. Fifty-four percent of the respondents said without the child care grants, they would have borrowed more to attend postsecondary education. While juggling responsibility for care of children, postsecondary coursework and employment, 60 percent of respondents took the time to write comments at the end of the survey. The theme of most of the comments was that the child care assistance they received was very important in allowing them to attend college. (Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 2000)

Areas for Further Study – Financial Aid

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education recognizes the important and ongoing nature of studying the reality faced by low-income students. Enrollment patterns of low-income students, financial aid and non-financial factors have a large impact on a student's ability to enroll, persist, and complete their postsecondary education. It is important to continue to examine these issues over time and in greater detail than was feasible within the parameters of this report.

“Four suggestions for how states could improve the preparation and performance of all students in postsecondary education, but particularly for the most disadvantaged students: 1) increase funding of early intervention programs for at-risk students because this should have positive effects on readiness, access, equity, and retention without much, if any negative effect on quality; 2) include more stringent preparation requirements as part of eligibility for state need-based student aid programs; 3) target student aid funds more toward students from low-income families and other traditionally under-represented groups of students; 4) pay institutions for the number of Pell Grant recipients who finish a year of study, transfer, or complete a degree.” Hauptman (2007)

Incorporation of data about low-income students into regular reporting is a critical next step. Available enrollment and success measures for low-income students will be considered for inclusion in the *Minnesota Measures* report, analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, financial aid analyses as well as future reviews of the programs and initiatives of the Office.

Additional empirical analysis is needed regarding what is required of students to earn and/or borrow to pay Assigned Student Responsibilities at the prices students face in the marketplace. Such analysis would better inform discussions about the Minnesota State Grant program.

Another way to probe this issue further would be to convene a series of focus groups of students and staff at various postsecondary institutions to probe the impact not only of funding but also of programs, policies, and support services and how well they promote student access and success.

The Office of Higher Education is also working with the Minnesota Department of Education and the postsecondary systems on a data base for analyses of how students progress from pre-school education through K-12 and postsecondary education. The role of income in student success will be an important area of concern. Having better information on how finances impact students over time can help refine the analysis of how financial aid and other programs can best serve the needs of students.

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