



The

Phyllis Schlafly Report



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Education Spending Dollars and Sense

Education Spending Won't Create Jobs

Contrary to Obama's political rhetoric, more taxpayer spending to send more students to college will not reduce unemployment or improve the economy. It's just Obama's way of finagling the unemployment statistics by listing young people as students instead of as unemployed.

A report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland confirmed that when it comes to long-term unemployment, the length of unemployment is unrelated to education level. Although employment is higher for people with more years of education, the duration of unemployment is the same for all education levels.

A new phrase is now commonly included in job ads for all kinds of positions: "must be currently employed." Charts from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show remarkably parallel lines for the duration of unemployment of Americans age 25 and older who have less than a high school diploma, only a high school diploma, some college, or a college degree.

The Obama Administration continues to propagate the falsehood that solving the unemployment problem requires "more investments in education." Investment is a favorite liberal code word for more spending and higher taxes.

As globalization spread and was touted by the elites as the wave of the future, conventional wisdom was that only blue-collar manufacturing jobs would be sent overseas while college grads were safe. That assumption is now obsolete, as computers and telecommunications have made it possible to offshore the jobs of college-educated employees.

I thought it was a tossup as to which was the greatest education scandal: the \$2 trillion taxpayers poured into public schools that failed the twin goals of improving student achievement and closing the gap between higher-income and lower-income students, OR the colossal debt students accumulate to pay exorbitant college tuition prices. But the Chronicle of Higher Education reported a third scandal under the headline "The Great College-Degree Scam."

The Center for College Affordability and Productivity (CCAP) found that approximately 60% of the increase in the number of college graduates from 1992 to 2008 now work in

relatively low-skilled jobs that need only a high school diploma or less. The actual count is 17.4 million college grads working in occupations that the Bureau of Labor Statistics classifies as not requiring college, such as cashier, waiter, waitress, or bartender.

Facts do not deter the Obama Administration from playing the false tune that more federal education spending is the key to more jobs. White House Domestic Policy Adviser Melody Barnes reprised this myth with a stream of buzzwords: education is the "key to winning the future," we need to "improve educational outcomes" so we can "win in the global marketplace," we must "out-educate the world" and put "greater emphasis on critical thinking and collaborative problem solving," and grab "our generation's 'Sputnik moment.'"

Vice President Joe Biden joined in this campaign by launching his "College Completion Tool Kit," a bunch of expensive suggestions to increase the number of college graduates by 50%. He wants to shift the focus from high school completion to college completion and, of course, do more to subsidize the latter.

Biden was the lead speaker at "The First Annual Building a Grad Nation Summit" held in Washington in March, to be followed by a similar summit held by each governor. The plan sets forth vague goals such as developing an action plan, using data to drive decision making, accelerating learning, and relabeling "remedial" courses in college as "developmental."

Of course, Biden's plan calls for extravagant taxpayer handouts such as the "First in the World" initiative to support "innovative practices," and College Completion Incentive Grants to reward states for undertaking "reforms." That's on top of money already committed by the Obama Administration, such as \$40 billion more in Pell grants, a 90% increase in tax incentives through the American Opportunity Tax credit, making it easier for students to get grants and loans, and forgiving the college debt of students who promise ten years of public service.

Why should taxpayers be forced to continue unaffordable deficit spending to send more kids to college when the evidence shows that our economy is not offering enough jobs for college graduates now?

The biggest issue today is the need to rebuild an economy that offers the three-fourths of Americans without a college degree jobs which pay enough to buy a home and support a wife raising their own children. Somehow we lost that kind of a society through a combination of feminism, unilateral divorce, illegal and legal immigration, and the steady drumbeat of free-trade elitists telling us that globalism makes it our duty to compete with foreigners willing to work for as little as 30 cents an hour with no benefits.

The party that has the best solution to the jobs issue will win in 2012. More years of taxpayer-funded schooling are not the answer.

The High Price of College

The favorite question liberal newsmen ask incoming Republican members of Congress is: you promised to cut federal spending, so what programs will you cut? A good answer is college student grants and loans because those handouts are probably wasteful and harmful.

Since Obama became President he has increased student aid by nearly 50% to \$145 billion a year, including an additional \$10 billion in Pell grants. It's unclear that these extravagant handouts benefit the young people they are supposed to help.

It's unlikely that students will get a job that justifies the colossal price paid by the students (or their parents, who may be taking out a second mortgage) who cough up the sticker price, or the colossal debt students accumulate. As Ronald Reagan reminded us, Why don't we find out if what we are doing is part of the problem?

The more federal money handed out for college tuition, the more the price of tuition rises for everyone. Government financial aid always makes things cost more, not less (just like health care), so it should be no surprise that college tuition has been rising faster than the consumer price index.

Tuition prices (not counting room and board) currently average \$7,605 per year for four-year public institutions and \$27,293 for private colleges and universities. Including room and board, the average annual cost at public four-year institutions is \$16,140 and at private four-year colleges and universities is \$36,993.

The total price usually quoted for college is the annual price times four. But that figure is grossly understated because only 60% of college students in four-year colleges graduate within six years, making the total price (to parents or to student debt or to the taxpayers) much higher than the four-year price.

The average student-loan debt of students who graduated last year was \$24,000. Students, their parents and the taxpayers should ask, is college worth it?

It's unlikely the graduates will get a job that can pay off that kind of debt. In the current economy in which unemploy-

ment for 20-to-24-year-olds is running at 10%, will they get a job at all?

Law school graduates are even deeper in the debt ditch, with the average tuition debt owed by graduates of public law schools \$71,436, and by private law school graduates \$91,506. Twelve percent of last year's law school graduates couldn't find law jobs, and many of those who did got only temporary or part-time jobs.

Taxpayers are soaked for \$7.6 billion given to "flame-out freshmen": the students who dropped out during or at the end of their first year. No evidence has yet surfaced on whether they were taking only non-college, high-school-level courses euphemistically labeled remedial.

It's not clear that even the students who stick it out for four (or six) years are getting a real or useful education. Exorbitant tuition prices cover salaries for well-paid leftwing professors to teach hundreds of so-called "niche" courses that crowd out general knowledge and skills.

A 2010 survey of 700 four-year universities by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni revealed how many elite colleges allow students to take these niche courses to satisfy core curriculum requirements. The most neglected core subjects are economics, required in only 4% of colleges, and U.S. government and history, which is required in only 19%.

Only 16 colleges require at least six of the seven core subjects, and Yale, Cornell and Brown are among 103 colleges that require only one, or none, of the core subjects.

California State University at Monterey Bay allows students to count the History of Rock and Roll as their required course in U.S. History. Emory University allows students to choose among 600 courses to fulfill the History, Society and Culture requirement, including one called Gynecology in the Ancient World.

A class about television satisfies a Literature requirement at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The University of California in Los Angeles offers Queer Musicology.

The best hope for bringing down the price of college tuition is to get the government out of the mix. Another solution may be the spread of online courses to replace the construction and maintenance of expensive buildings.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced in 2001 that it would put its entire course catalog on line. Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and the University of Michigan offer major portions of their courses on line, all free.

Some colleges let enrolled students take courses on line. Estimates are that 4.6 million students took a college level online course in 2008, a number that is rising rapidly.

At the University of Florida, resident students earn 12% of credit hours online. Professor Mark Rush has 1,500 undergraduates enrolled in his class, and no lecture hall can hold them.

This isn't distance learning. Students are not far from campus; they may be in bed wearing pajamas, the casual dress code for attendance.

What Students Learn and Don't Learn

If you are attending college to get teacher certification, you will probably be required to attend classes on "multicultural education." This is supposed to bring diversity to the classroom and prepare teachers to teach pupils of various ethnic or national backgrounds.

The textbooks in these courses typically include *Teachers as Cultural Workers* by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian socialist who preached that society is divided into oppressors and oppressed. Other required readings teach that Americans are an institutionally racist society and are designed to train teachers to create political radicals to promote "progressive" social change.

The monthly journal *Education Reporter* published an informative expose by a teacher who attended a conference on training teachers how to teach students what is called "social justice," a code word for a specific type of teaching that is contrary to traditional American notions of justice based on individual rights. "Social justice" teaches children that America is an unjust and oppressive society that should be changed.

Social justice materials typically include far left proposals such as acceptance of homosexuality, alternate lifestyles, radical feminism, abortion, illegal immigration, cultural relativism, and the redistribution of wealth.

Social justice is often promoted through what is called "student-directed learning" because students are supposed to "construct" their own knowledge. These words put a new spin on what was previously called "unguided learning" or "minimal guidance learning."

Common sense and hundreds of years of education tell us that anyone first needs a base of knowledge in order to know what to look for when conducting research and doing problem-solving. Instead of teaching students American history and what's great about our country, liberal policy is to have 12-and-13-year-olds "brainstorm" topics they want to talk about, which typically include marijuana, gun violence, Afghanistan, poverty, and youth culture.

More and more universities are telling incoming freshmen to read a book over the summer. One college says the purpose is to promote "a shared intellectual experience" and "campus-wide dialogue"; another college says its summer reading program "is an important first step in building a cohesive, dynamic, educational community."

However, the National Association of Scholars (NAS) issued a report called "What Do Colleges Want Students to Read Outside of Class?" that lists the books recommended by 290 colleges. These scholars found that the books are more suited to Oprah's Book Club than universities, and "rather than asking students to rise to college-level study, they shrink college-level study to the comfort zone of the average student."

The book selections are usually "short" and "emotional" and offer "little if any intellectual substance." The most popular

book in 2010 was *This I Believe*, a collection of essays on personal philosophies gathered by National Public Radio. The second most assigned book was *Enrique's Journey*, the story of an illegal immigrant boy's trip from Honduras to the United States.

The NAS found that 70% of the books "promote a liberal political agenda or advance a liberal interpretation of events," and not one of the books advocated conservative political ideas. Only three books represented traditional values, and those were selected by religious colleges.

The most popular topics were multiculturalism, immigration and racism; after that came environmentalism, animal rights and food issues. On the whole, the books presented what the NAS report called "a distinctly disaffected view of American society and Western civilization."

These summer reading lists included no works of classical antiquity, Shakespeare, or any Renaissance writers. Three colleges ditched book assignments altogether and told students to watch a DVD instead.

A new study reports the dismal finding that 45% of college students show no significant improvement in the key measures of critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing by the end of their sophomore year. During their prior semester, half the students did not take a single course that required 20 pages of writing, and a third did not take a single course requiring so much as 20 pages of reading per week.

Those findings are set forth in a new book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* by sociologists Richard Arum of New York University and Josipa Roksa of the University of Virginia. They surveyed a representative sample of 24 schools.

Ohio University economist Richard Vetter reported that a majority of the increased number of college graduates are working jobs that historically have been filled by persons with less education. Over 300,000 bartenders have college degrees, and college is not an essential qualification for those jobs.

The Obama Administration claims we must graduate more college students in order to stay globally competitive, but there's no evidence this is true. If students didn't learn much in the first two years, why should we go into more debt to keep them in college more years?

Public School Spending's Simple Solution

As the new Republican House majority wrestles with ways to cut our unsustainable budget deficit, Barack Obama threw down the gauntlet. On March 14 he said: "We cannot cut education."

But why not? If we are going to cut programs that are proven to have failed to achieve their goals, federal spending on education should be at the top of the list.

Federal spending on public schools (which is only a small percentage of their school budgets) was given specific goals

in the 2002 law called "No Child Left Behind," the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It required states to set targets to have all students proficient in reading and math by 2014, to meet an annual benchmark of progress toward this goal, and in particular to demonstrate a closing or narrowing of the gap between higher-income and minority students.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan threw a cannonball into the education debate in March by admitting that 82% of public schools could be labeled "failing" under No Child Left Behind specifications. His solution is to stop calling them "failing," extend the target date for student proficiency to 2020 and, of course, to appropriate more money to failed programs.

For years, education spokesmen have opined that kids should be able to read by the fourth grade. Good for Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker who is now calling for the reading goal to be third grade, and this goal is also being advocated by the Indiana and New Mexico governors.

Obama wants to put more money into the notoriously useless program called Head Start, and he increased its annual funding in 2009 by nearly \$3 billion. U.S. taxpayers have given Head Start \$166 billion of taxpayers' money since 1965 despite many studies proving that it was mostly wasted, did not give poor kids a head start, and any gains made while kids were in Head Start disappeared within a couple of years.

Since conservatives famously lost the battle to prevent federal spending on local public schools (which they view as unconstitutional) a half century ago, Congress has year after year increased appropriations. In recent years, Congress identified two primary purposes: to raise student achievement and to narrow the gap between high- and low-income students and between white and minority students.

We the federal taxpayers have spent roughly \$2 trillion on these efforts since 1965. It's reasonable to ask, did we get our money's worth?

If we look at the class that graduated from the public schools in 2009, we find that we spent over \$151,000 per student to bring him from the first to the twelfth grade. That's nearly three times as much (adjusted for inflation) as we spent on the graduating class of 1970.

Despite that massive spending, overall achievement has stagnated or declined. The gaps between minority and white students are unchanged in science and only slightly narrowed in reading and math.

We have precious little to show for the \$2 trillion in federal education spending over the past half century, and Andrew J. Coulson of CATO has the charts to prove it. It now costs three times as much to provide essentially the same education as we provided in 1970.

Even this bad news fails to give the big picture because, as productivity was falling in public schools, it was rising everywhere else. Nearly all the products and services most of us buy have gotten better, more affordable, or both, over the past two generations.

The fact that there is no education improvement even while spending has skyrocketed is a disaster unparalleled in any other field. In addition to the waste, this gigantic spending slowed our economic growth by taxing trillions of dollars out of the productive sector of the economy and squandering it on worthless programs.

Knowing that learning to read is fundamental to education, the public school lobby is yelping about proposed cuts in grants for literacy programs. Yes, literacy should be job number one, but after all these years why do we have to go to the unnecessary expense of passing out money to find a good reading program?

Children should be taught to read in the first grade by an authentic phonics system in which they learn the sounds and syllables of the English language and how to put them together to read words of more than one syllable. There is nothing expensive or mysterious about this basic task.

Instead of wasting more federal money on grant-writers and grant-readers, we should tell local districts to award a bonus to first-grade teachers based on how many kids they actually teach to read. Let the teacher select the phonics system she thinks will help her win the bonus.

Phyllis Schlafly is the author of a phonics system for first-graders called *First Reader*, which sells for only \$29.95 with an accompanying Workbook for \$9.95 (free shipping). www.FirstReader.com & 800-700-5228

Recommended Books especially for parents who are sending their children off to college:

- **Debt-Free U: How I Paid for an Outstanding College Education Without Loans, Scholarships, or Mooching Off My Parents** by Zac Bissonnette, Portfolio/Penguin, 2010.
- **The Five-Year Party: How Colleges Have Given Up on Educating Your Child and What You Can Do About It** by Craig Brandon, BenBella Books, 2010

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