Clemson University Laboratory for Deliberative Democracy

Shaping Our Future
How Should Higher Education Help Us Create the Society We Want?
Shaping Our Future: How Should Higher Education Help Us Create The Society We Want?

- Welcome & Ground Rules
- Video
- Personal Stake
- Deliberation
  - Option One: Focus on Staying Competitive in the Global Economy
  - Option Two: Work Together and Repair an Ailing Economy
  - Option Three: Ensure That Everyone Gets a Fair Chance
- Reflections
  - Individual
  - Group
  - Next Steps
- Post-Forum Questionnaire
Ground Rules

• The moderator(s) will guide the discussion, but remain neutral.

• Everyone is encouraged to participate.

  *No one dominates.*

• The discussion stays focused on the issue at hand.

• All three approaches are fairly considered.

  *Examine the pros, cons and possible trade-offs of each approach.*

• Maintain an atmosphere for discussion and analysis of the approaches.

  *This is a deliberative discussion, NOT a debate.*

• **Listening is as important as talking.**

• **Work toward making a decision.**

  *How would you act on this issue?*

  *What approach is best for our community*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBSQXwt09iU&feature=player_embedded
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Personal Stake

What is your personal experience with this issue?

How does this issue effect you?

What concerns you about this issue?

Why is this an important issue?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>OPTION ONE</strong></th>
<th><strong>OPTION TWO</strong></th>
<th><strong>OPTION THREE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus on Staying Competitive in the Global Economy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work Together and Repair an Ailing Society</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ensure that Everyone Gets a Fair Chance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education should help ensure that our economy remains competitive in a tough global market place – and that means recapturing our lead in science and technology. Countries like China are transforming their systems to educate more high-tech professionals, and we should too. It’s our best chance to keep our economy growing.</td>
<td>Many of the problems we face as a nation reflect an underlying crisis of division and mistrust. Higher education shapes students’ views about the larger society, and it can do more to strengthen values like responsibility, integrity, and respect for others. Students also need real-life experience in collaboration and problem solving.</td>
<td>We call this the land of opportunity, but it isn’t that way for many Americans. Because graduating from college unlocks the doors to advancement, higher education and government should do much more to ensure that all Americans have an equal shot at getting a degree – without accumulating huge debts.</td>
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## Focus on Staying Competitive in the Global Economy

Higher education should help ensure that our economy remains competitive in a tough global marketplace—and that means recapturing our lead in science and technology. Countries like China are transforming their systems to educate more high-tech professionals, and we should too. It’s our best chance to keep our economy growing.

### Examples of What Might Be Done

- All students should be required to take more courses in science and math, and families should encourage their children to pursue degrees in these areas.
- Scholarships and low-interest loans should be geared to students who excel in math, science, engineering, and technology—fields that provide the most benefit to the economy.
- Citizens should be willing to support more government funding for university-based science and technology research, especially projects where industry and higher education work together and share results.
- Colleges and universities should re-allocate their funds to create top-notch science and technology programs and maintain the labs and technology needed to support them.

### Trade-Offs to Consider

- Many students aren’t interested in or adept in these fields. College dropout rates could rise if students can’t pass these required courses.
- This means that students who excel in the humanities or the arts won’t get as much help as students in technical fields.
- Federal and state budgets are already gushing red ink, and too much involvement by business and industry could end up distorting the educational mission of higher education.
- But this could narrow the curriculum and reduce students’ choices. College should be a place where students study philosophy, art history, and music—a broad range of subjects.

## But...

Without the right values to guide us, technology and economic growth can do as much harm as good. One danger is that emphasizing a culture of competition, which prizes excellence and high achievement, could lead us to neglect our obligation to those who aren’t as accomplished or as competitive.
**Work Together and Repair an Ailing Society**

Many of the problems we face as a nation reflect an underlying crisis of division and mistrust. Higher education shapes students’ views about the larger society, and it can do more to strengthen values like responsibility, integrity, and respect for others. Students also need real-life experience in collaboration and problem solving.

### Examples of What Might Be Done

- Teaching integrity and responsibility and instilling habits of cooperation, problem solving, respect for others, and the ability to reach across divides should be part of every college education.
- Colleges and universities should enforce codes of conduct that set high standards for honesty, integrity, and behavior.
- Projects and internships that teach community and collaborative problem solving should be required as part of any educated person’s experience.
- Colleges and universities should have diverse student bodies and faculty, including students from other countries. Learning to work with people of different backgrounds is essential today.
- All students—including community college students—should study American and world history, science, the arts and literature, government, economics, and philosophy. This helps students develop a better understanding of how different people think and how our society works.

### Trade-Offs to Consider

- This puts schools and professors in the position of deciding what’s moral and responsible.
- This means colleges and universities will be policing students and prying into their private lives.
- These projects thrust students and their colleges and universities into political debates and advocacy which is not appropriate for them.
- Having more students from abroad means fewer slots for American students, and many community colleges and public universities are already overcrowded.
- Emphasizing this kind of general education could mean we don’t have enough highly skilled people in business, science and technology. It also means students have to invest time and money in courses that don’t specifically prepare them for the job market.

**But...**

This means colleges and universities, rather than families and communities, will be shaping students’ ethical, social, and political outlook. It’s a slippery slope and one that takes time and resources away from higher education’s mission of developing intellectual and career skills.
### ENSURE THAT EVERYONE GETS A FAIR CHANCE

We call this the land of opportunity, but it isn’t that way for many Americans. Because graduating from college unlocks the door to advancement, higher education and government should do much more to ensure that all Americans have an equal shot at getting a degree—without accumulating huge debts.

#### Examples of What Might Be Done

- Financial aid, including scholarships and work study opportunities, should be expanded to give lower- and middle-income students the help they need to attend college.
- Colleges and universities should keep costs under control by offering more online courses and making sure that programs and departments are really cost effective and necessary.
- We should support more government funding for low-income students, low-interest loans for middle-class students, and debt forgiveness for those who graduate with large debts.
- Instead of giving up on students at risk of not graduating, colleges and universities should require professors and counselors to invest more time in tutoring and mentoring, and should offer more effective remedial courses.
- State systems should require four-year schools to accept transfer students from community colleges and expand capacity so there’s room for any student who wants to enter a bachelor’s degree program.

### BUT...

College is not for everyone. Higher education may end up lowering academic standards to help more students attend and graduate. And squeezing colleges and universities to keep costs low could reduce quality.

#### Trade-Offs to Consider

- This means basing these policies on a student’s income rather than on his or her academic achievements or abilities.
- This could reduce quality. Schools might not be able to offer the courses, facilities, and campus experiences that students deserve.
- Taxpayers are already stretched. Families will have less incentive to save for college.
- Colleges and universities may be tempted to lower standards in order to help students graduate. And students have a responsibility here—they have to put in the effort to do the work.
- This will mean more overcrowding and wait lists for more courses. Expanding capacity means spending more taxpayer dollars.
Reflections and Weighing-in

• How has your thinking about this issue changed?
• Has your thinking about how others view this issue changed?
• Did our forum result in a shared sense of purpose or direction?
  • If so, what is it?
    • Agreement on?
    • Needs further discussion?
• What trade offs are we (or are we not) willing to make to move in a shared direction?
• What recommendations would you make to policy and decision-makers regarding this issue?
• What can you do about this issue?
USC Students thought STEM should be introduced as early as K-12 and they thought they could help engage elementary students in STEM activities.

Students talked a lot about personal responsibility and said students needed to take the responsibility to excel and thus gain the skills needed to be in the workforce and help solve societal problems.

Students were worried where the money will come from if the cost of higher education kept going up. “It is too expensive, but if it were free it would be wasted.”

**ACTION OUTCOME:**

Students worked with administration to form a mentor program for elementary students inclusive of STEM subject mentoring.
15 of 16 inmates articulated goals for higher education of two-year or four-year college or university, or a trade school. One young man said, “Honestly, I have not thought about it until now.”

The inmates were concerned that the jobs they might get when they get out of prison are the same low-paying jobs that many Americans won’t take, but “foreigners” will fill them. “Some people want the best job possible; we want whatever job we can get.”

One inmate said that he thought information was managed by the rich. “Knowledge is guarded,” he said. “It is really difficult to find out what resources are available; seemingly many people won’t share what they know in order to help someone.”

“We need an in-between program,” one inmate said. The others shook their head yes.

**ACTION OUTCOME:**
The Extension Service & CIECD are pursuing a Rural Development Education grant to help establish an incubator farm on the prison’s 7000 acres for Youthful Offenders to learn agri-business skills.
Students need real opportunity to see people doing their jobs; it might excite students to do what is necessary to learn the skills they need for something they would really like to do. We can’t learn everything in one spot. We can learn everywhere.

SC does not have a history of strong support for education for everyone. A “minimally adequate” education for some citizens is not a good policy. South Carolina has a history that has neglected education. There is a disconnect in what we say we want to do and what we fund.

Participants felt everyone should support higher education and said they were willing to pay more taxes to do so. “We need to practice leadership by example.”

All schools should have dual requirements of service/morality learning. “We cannot shape the future without ethics and morality.”

Businesses need to step up and do their part to reduce the cost of higher education – particularly those making big profits. And, government can provide incentives for businesses “doing the right thing.”
ACTION OUTCOMES:

Participants have begun planning how they can continue the conversation.

They feel they could help change things in South Carolina if they work together.

“We need to work hand and glove with 2-year and 4-year colleges. Things will only start to move when we move together.”

** 14 of the 27 people participating in this forum had post graduate degrees, 9 had four year degrees, and 2 students had completed two years of college.
Why is higher education important? It helps one define what they want to contribute to society one participants said. Another said, Because our country is in trouble!

International students pursuing STEM degrees should be welcomed in our colleges and universities - and in our workplaces.

Participants pointed out that that our education system and society appeared not to necessarily mirror the values that are often stated as being desired.

Public colleges & universities have more money in athletic departments than in academic departments.

The business community needs to invest more in higher education. “They benefit from a well-educated workforce. They need to do more.”
ACTION OUTCOMES:

Many participants gave examples of quality educational programs and policies in other states as well as some exceptional programs functioning in SC.

Many people acknowledged they had not heard of these ideas and programs. This prompted participants to suggest initiating a targeted marketing campaign and a word of mouth higher education promotion.

“We need an ongoing statewide conversation to enhance the value of life long, continuing, higher education and to expose citizens to the many good programs and resources in the state supportive of higher education for all citizens.”

A “We Can Do This Attitude” developed, and one educator stepped forward to provide leadership for the new campaign.
Please complete the post-forum questionnaire. Thank you.

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Free Materials Available At: www.nifi.org