

FORUM

Make today a great day

Nigel Alston
Motivational
Moments

"You must have long-range goals to keep you from being frustrated by short-range failures."

- Charles C. Noble

It is early afternoon, Jan. 1, 2004. Another new year has been ushered in under the cover of night as people around the world joined the countdown, seconds before midnight. There were secular and spiritual parties, toasts to good health, hugs and kisses to celebrate the new year.

It is a clear, cool day, a day I would describe as, like each one I witness, another good day above ground (AGDAYAG). We have one more opportunity to enjoy and appreciate life - to live, learn, grow and share with others. And, as the old folks would say, I have a reasonable portion of health and strength.

I used to wonder what that statement meant. Now, I know firsthand. I truly have nothing to complain about (what about you?), even though I do fall into that state from time to time. That's human nature, I suppose. I come out of it rather quickly when I think

Students can't pay skyrocketing college costs

Adolph Reed Jr.
Guest Columnist

Higher education ought to be a right, available to every student who makes the grade, without regard to that student's ability to pay.

But it's increasingly a privilege for the rich - and an impossible burden for the poor.

There is a spiraling crisis of affordability in higher education today.

As almost every state reels from the effects of tax cuts, legislatures slash funding for higher education. Colleges respond with hefty tuition increases, reduced financial assistance and new fees.

According to the College Board, over the last decade, average tuition and fees at public four-year colleges increased 40 percent and private four-year tuition increased 33 percent.

Community colleges, the gateway to advanced studies for many, also increased charges.

Tuition and fees rose in all but two states, with 10 states mandating increases of more than 10 percent, according to the National Center on Public Policy and Higher Education.

Some community college officials in California estimate an enrollment decline of about 200,000 students due to tuition fee increases.

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whose net worth has declined over the last two years for the first time in half a century.

Budget cuts and tuition increases ripple throughout the academic community. They result in more hiring freezes and

early retirements among full-time faculty. Replacing them are poorly paid and overworked contingent instructors. Meanwhile, students have fewer courses to choose from, and their classes are overcrowded.

Many universities are retreating from their commitments to provide low-cost education for state residents, as they shift the balance of admissions more toward out-of-state applicants, who pay substantially higher tuition.

State schools have traditionally been the ladders to good jobs for students from working and middle-class families. But that ladder is no longer standing.

In fact, the Congressional Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance reports that by the end of this decade, as many as 4.4 million college-qualified high-school graduates will be unable to enroll in a four-year college, and 2 million will not go to college at all because they can't afford it.

Financial aid is not picking up the slack. Three decades ago, Pell grants helped guarantee

access to public colleges for primarily low and moderate-income students. Millions of Americans earned college degrees as a result. In 1975, the maximum Pell grant covered 84 percent of costs at a four-year public college. Now, the grant covers only 42 percent of costs at four-year public colleges and only 16 percent of costs at four-year private colleges.

As a result of an increasing reliance on loans, the majority of students (64 percent) graduate with an average debt of almost \$17,000. This is up significantly from \$8,200 in 1989.

Skyrocketing tuition and reliance on interest-carrying loans force some students to forgo college altogether, while others drop out or delay graduation because they sacrifice the time for their studies in order to work. Fifty-three percent of low-income freshmen who work more than 35 hours per week drop out and do not receive a degree. Contrast this with low-income freshmen who work one to 14 hours per week. Only 20 percent of them do not receive a degree.

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