

Study: College access uneven

Schools failing to close income gap

BY DORA P. GONZALEZ
STAFF WRITER

The Higher Education Act — intended to close the gap between low income and high income students in higher education institutions — is not working as it should be, according to recent findings.

The most recent publication of the Century Foundation, a think-tank that studies economic inequality, shows the gap is as large as it was when the act was first passed in 1965. The act is set for renewal this year by the U.S. Congress.

Lack of financial aid, a poor K-12 education and the fact that universities don't seek economic diversity are the three main reasons low-income or working-class students do not attend college, said

Richard Kahlenberg, senior fellow at the Century Foundation and editor of the book, America's Untapped Resource: Low-Income Students in Higher Education.

Kahlenberg said the lack of financial aid and information about available aid makes many students afraid to apply for college.

But Steve Brooks, executive director of the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, said there is state aid for low-income families.

"It's not that people get turned down for aid," he said. "Unless a student applies for financial aid, there is no way of knowing what their income is."

But nationwide, financial aid programs are underfunded and don't cover everything students need, Kahlenberg said, especially noting the Pell Grant. For the 2002-03 academic year, the maximum amount a student could receive from the federally funded

Pell Grant was \$4,000.

On top of this, Kahlenberg said, higher education institutions do not seek economic diversity in the same way they have promoted racial and ethnic diversity.

Kahlenberg's book states that 13.2 percent of UNC students receive the Pell Grant. If the school wants to be as economically diverse as the national population, the book states, 40 percent of its students should be receiving the grant.

Damon Ford, spokesman for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, said that low income students sometimes choose not to pursue higher education and that it is not necessarily because of a lack of information or financial aid.

"Sometimes students have a dream that doesn't require for them to go to college."

Brooks also said low-income students often do not enroll at UNC because they "don't see themselves going to college."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Schools re-evaluating legacy admission plans

Texas A&M, UGa. abolish the policy

BY DAN PIERGALLINI
STAFF WRITER

Children of university alumni are seeing their application advantage disappear as institutions such as Texas A&M University and the University of Georgia abolish their legacy policies in efforts to make admissions processes more equal.

The practice has come under the scrutiny of Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, a U.S. senator from North Carolina, making it a platform issue for the 2004 election. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., also introduced legislation that would require universities to release detailed statistics about people who are admitted due in part to legacy policies.

"In an admissions process based on individual merit and potential

contribution to the university community, prior affiliation with Texas A&M should not be a criterion," stated Robert Gates, president of Texas A&M, in a press release.

Although policies vary, legacy admission practices generally give an advantage to those whose relatives have attended the university.

Gates added that the "solidity of the Aggie family ... (is) not the result of four out of 100 (legacy) points on an admissions evaluation."

He added that since the program's inception in 1989, legacy played a smaller part in Texas A&M's admission process than most people, both inside and outside the university, thought it did.

The University of Georgia also stopped using legacy status as an admission factor in 2002 because of its relative unimportance and perceived unfairness, said Tom Jackson, UGa. associate vice president for public affairs.

UGa. stopped using legacy status when Georgia courts ruled that it could not use race as an admission factor. "(UGa.) has only been integrated 40 years and has been around for 200, so there are a lot more white legacies than there are minorities," Jackson said.

UNC has not considered dropping legacy consideration in admis-

sions and also considers race and other factors, said Barbara Polk, the University's senior associate director of undergraduate admissions.

Legacy admissions are more of a factor for nonresidents than for N.C. applicants, Polk said. "Among North Carolina residents, legacy ties can be considered only in a tiebreaking situation," she said.

But out-of-state students compete with other children of alumni for 80 spots set aside specifically for nonresident legacy students.

According to statistics from UNC's Office of Undergraduate Admissions, nonlegacy out-of-state applicants for freshmen admission last fall were accepted at a rate of 18 percent. Nonresident legacy applicants were accepted at almost double that rate — 35.5 percent.

Stephen Farmer, senior associate director for undergraduate admissions, said that many applicants would have been competitive without their legacy status but that some legacy applicants "benefit from the policy of setting aside spots" for legacy students, adding that they were still academically qualified.

In-state legacy applicants at UNC are accepted at a rate of 69 percent, 9.7 percentage points higher than the acceptance rate of nonlegacies.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

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UNC's Women's Club Ultimate Team, Pleiades, is gearing up for a competitive spring season. We are very excited to have a new coach this season, Pleiades alumnus, Katy Harris. Katy played with Pleiades for 4 years and her knowledge and enthusiasm should be a big asset for our team. We will kick off our season with the Queen City Tune Up in Charlotte, February 7-8, which is a tournament that we co-host with the UNC Men's team, Darkside.

WOMEN'S CLUB ULTIMATE

Other TOURNAMENTS this season include:
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