# Increasing Access to Community Colleges by Making Them Tuition Free

Increasing access to education demands that various measures be applied to ensure that education is not only accessible, but that the access is also equitable for all. Nevertheless, there are two major question in relation to the issue of increasing access to community college by making the colleges tuition free. The first question in this respect is whether making community colleges tuition free makes economic sense. The second question is whether making the community colleges tuition free can achieve the desired target for increased student enrollment. This memo approach and answer these questions in three perspectives:

## The Experiences of Other States

The concept of increasing education access through making community colleges tuition free has been previously adopted by different states. For example, Tennessee passed a legislation allowing the community colleges in the state to become free not only in tuition but also in other fees for all adults (Lobosco, n.p.). The state had introduced the Tennessee initiative program allowing all high school graduates to enroll for free in community colleges in 2014, but is now expanding the program to all adults (Lobosco, n.p). Based on the Tennessee experience, it can be said that the program is workable. Similarly, Rhode Islands has introduced its promise program that makes community college education free both in fees and tuition, following the example of New York and Oregon, which had done the same earlier (Smith n.p.). California is another state that has followed suit in introducing the free education at its community colleges, after years of a history offering the lowest community college charges (Smith n.p.). Therefore, the fact that several states are introducing the program means that it is workable.

## Whether This Is Good Economic Policy

According to a research study by the Manhattan Institute, offering tuition free community college education will does not make a positive economic sense. The creation of tuition free community college programs by states has the impact of placing the burden of paying for the education on the tax payers (Eden, 1). However, the problem is that even when the tax payer caters for educational costs of the community colleges, the enrollment and completion rate for the targeted students is not guaranteed to increase. For example, the statistics of the OECD countries have indicated that the attainment of college degree education for countries charging college fees is higher at 43% compared to the countries that offer tuition-free college education at 38% (Eden, 2). Additionally, offering tuition-free education by the states may be limited by the states budgets, thus forcing them to cut back on the number of students enrolled in the free education programs or lead to lowering of the education in these colleges (Eden, 2). The outcome is fewer people may acquire quality education in the end, and as such, the economic value of education would be lost.

## The Best Way to Design Such a Program

The best way to organize the tuition-free education program is to offer the program only to full-time students. The outcome of organizing the tuition-free community college program on full time basis is that it will increase the success rate of enrollment and completion (Lobosco, n.p.). Additionally, the organization of the tuition-free community college education on full-time basis will create a smooth transition program, because the program will be able to enroll as much students as those who are graduating every year, ensuring constant budgeting trajectory (Lobosco, n.p.).

## Works Cited

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