

NASFAA Forum: The State of College Access

January 18, 2012



Part of NASFAA's Mission Statement is to serve as a forum for communication and collaboration on student financial aid issues. One of the most fundamental issues of our profession is access to a postsecondary education. The first NASFAA Forum will examine two facets of access.

Part One

The Future Role of Federal Pell Grants

The Federal Pell Grant Program has been the cornerstone of America's commitment to making the benefits of postsecondary education available to eligible students for over 45 years. While the goal of access has remained the primary legislative purpose of the Pell Grant Program since its inception, a growing focus on accountability, combined with current budget realities, has created increased expectations for a return on investment.

In the past year alone the Pell Grant Program has faced—and continues to face—threats of funding cuts and significant eligibility changes. As such, the program has been placed under a microscope by policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, leading to key philosophical questions: *Has the Federal Pell Grant Program achieved its goal of assisting access to a postsecondary education? If the time has come to add persistence and completion as explicit goals, can Pell Grant alone achieve them? What barriers stand in the way of postsecondary success and how are they most effectively overcome?*

Please join us for a conversation with financial aid researchers to discuss important policy issues related to the current role of the Federal Pell Grant Program in ensuring access, and the outlook on possible future policy objectives.

Part Two

Beyond Pell: Other Pieces to the Access Puzzle

While funding is a large part of a student's ability to access postsecondary education, other barriers to postsecondary education also loom large. College outreach programs and student financial aid are necessary partners in achieving access for our nation's students. Academic or other interventions must partner with financial aid to achieve successful outcomes.

Early awareness about college preparation and financial aid are crucial in a student's ability to believe that higher education is an achievable goal. The most effective fostering of this belief is through human interaction, giving guidance and support as well as early information.

Join us for a dialogue with representatives from institutions and nonprofit organizations with unique and innovative college access and support initiatives to discuss their successful programs and how their services provide an important supplement to federal student aid.

