

Nick Carlson & Eva Ponder  
Professor McGaan  
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“Resolved that: Four year, baccalaureate colleges should raise admissions standards.”

### **1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative**

#### **Definitions:**

- “four-year, baccalaureate colleges” – institutions of higher education, both private and public, that award bachelor’s degrees at the completion of four-year programs.
  - *Includes:* colleges, universities
  - *Does not include:* community colleges, trade schools, or graduate schools
- “admissions standards” – combination of academic criteria used to accept or deny students acceptance into baccalaureate programs.
  - *Includes:* SAT/ACT scores, cumulative high school GPA or GED
  - *Does not include:* race, economic standing, religion, sex, etc.

#### **Problem**

1. Goal Failure – High percentage of students failing to finish a four-year college degree.
  - a. According to the U.S. Department of Education website, “The goal of Upward Bound,” one of the Department’s initiatives, “is to increase the rate at which participants complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education.”
  - b. According to Dr. Betsy O. Barefoot of the Policy Center on the First Year of College in a 2004 article, the student drop out rate is at its highest level between the first and second year (9).
  - c. The national aggregate first-to-second year retention rate for all four-year institutions is only 73% (Barefoot 10).
  - d. According to an extensive educational study published in *The Journal of Higher Education*, “taking many remedial courses clearly lowers graduation chances for students in bachelor’s degree programs” (Attewell et. al 908).
  - e. Currently, the national five-year rate of baccalaureate degree completion is less than 50%. Persistence is shown in that this rate has declined over the past 10 years (Barefoot 9).
2. Significant Harm – Dropouts have debt but no degree.
  - a. According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPE), “Half of all freshmen entering college borrow, and more than 20 percent of all borrowers drop out” (*College Dropouts* 16).
  - b. College dropouts have “no degree, a debt to repay and a high risk of defaulting on their loan,” according to Patrick Callan, president of the NCPPE. “In some cases, these students are worse off than before” (*College Dropouts* 16).

- c. This is relevant to college admission standards in that, only one in three students who took many remedial courses completed their degree within eight years (Attewell et al. 908).
3. Significant Harm – Remedial education in postsecondary education.
    - a. According to a 2006 article in *The Journal of Higher Education*, 40% of traditional undergraduates take at least one remedial course, and remediation is even more common among older, nontraditional students (Attewell et al. 886).
    - b. Dr. Ansley Abraham, director of the Southern Regional Education Board’s Doctoral Scholars Program affirms, “Nationally, about a third of the students entering college need remediation. Educationally, that’s probably higher than it should be” (Hamilton 31).
    - c. Harms the institution - Providing remediation courses takes money away from higher-level courses. It’s hard to do the work of a college when the institution is doing the work of a high school as well.
    - d. Harms the student – The student is kept in school longer, thereby accumulating more debt.
  4. Greater Good – Potential for Better Allocating Resources
    - a. Numerous professors who are professionals in their field of study are tied up teaching remedial courses. According to Abraham, many professors feel that “being relegated to remedial courses is used as a form of punishment” among faculty. “It’s a clear signal that you’ve lost favor” (Hamilton 33). Professors who feel punished are less likely to teach in a quality manner. Their talents could be better used (resulting in a more valuable education for their students) in more developed courses.
    - b. Institutions of higher education also have to spend a significant portion of their budgets to offer remedial courses.
    - c. According to a 2002 article in *Time* by John Cloud, taxpayers spend approximately \$1 billion a year on remedial classes (60).
  5. Significant Harm – When there are a significant number of students in a class who aren’t up to standard, it brings down the *entire* class.
    - a. According to noted educator, Dr. Lee McGaan, such an occurrence degrades the quality of the education received by both those who require remedial education and those who don’t (in-class conversation).
    - b. According to Dr. Hunter Boylan, professor and director of the National Center for Developmental Education, “Only 43 percent of America’s high school students complete a college preparatory curriculum, while 65 percent go on to college. So there’s a substantial percentage of students—22 percent—who enter college without having taken the curriculum that would properly prepare them” (Hamilton 32). 22% of students in a class is a significant number of students to lower the curriculum.

## Plan

1. Mandate – Our plan provides for 4-year, baccalaureate institutions to raise their admission standards.
2. Mechanism – Regional accreditation organizations (rao's) will only accredit institutions that have raised their admission standards.
3. Function
  - a. Intent – To direct students to institutions that can best meet their educational needs.
  - b. Procedure:
    - i. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) will mandate that, when accrediting a 4-year baccalaureate institution, all member rao's may only grant accreditation if the institution has raised its admission standards in the following ways:
      1. Raise the SAT/ACT/GPA/GED minimum allowance by 20% of its current standard
      2. Unless the institution is already in the top 10% of academic admission standards in the nation.
    - ii. During an institution's accreditation process, the rao will notify the institution of its standing in relation to the new admission standards.
    - iii. The institution will be given one accreditation cycle to comply with the standards.
    - iv. If the institution is successful in meeting the standards by the next accreditation process, accreditation will be granted and no lapse will have taken place.
    - v. If the institution is not successful in meeting the standards, accreditation will not be granted.
  - c. Enforcement – The rao's will enforce the policy on institutions using the power of accreditation, while CHEA will enforce the policy on rao's with the power of CHEA membership.

### **Workability**

1. The raising of standards has already seen marked success in the realm of post-secondary institutions.
2. As workability, we offer an analogy to the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Proposition 48.
  - a. "The intersection of athletics and academics is legitimized through eligibility rules, which provide standards that bind commercial athletics to the educational purposes of higher education. Through time, and amid considerable debate and controversy, the NCAA laid out initial eligibility requirements for athletes to ensure that all institutions would use the same minimum academic standards to consider prospective student athletes" (Heck 588).
  - b. In the 1980s Proposition 48 was adopted by the NCAA. Proposition 48 strengthened the initial eligibility requirements for Division I participation by:
    - i. Setting GPA standards

- ii. Setting the minimum SAT scores to 700
  - c. Although many assumed that this would limit access to NCAA athletics, recent research shows the contrary.
    - i. A 2006 study published in *Educational Policy* conducted by Ronald H. Heck and Robin Takahashi, professors at the University of Hawaii at Manoa followed the graduation rates of NCAA football players.
    - ii. It found that “The initial freshman graduation rate after the policy was introduced (1992) was considerably higher” than pre-Proposition rates (603).
    - iii. Even 5 years after the proposition was implemented, “the freshman graduation rate was still somewhat higher than pre-Proposition 48 levels” (603).
  - d. The raising of standards in the NCAA was statistically significant according to professors Heck and Takahashi.
  - e. Prospective athletes respected the new standards and undertook a college-preparatory course load in high school in order to meet the requirements.
- 3. This NCAA analogy can be applied to our plan, in that raising standards have been shown to motivate individuals to strive to meet those standards.

### **Solvency**

1. Goal Failure - High percentage of students failing to finish a four-year college degree.
  - a. Our plan will establish a better foundation for students entering rigorous college-level coursework.
  - b. According to Dr. Robert McCabe, “Nowhere in America is there a match between the requirements to graduate high school and the requirements to begin college work” (Hamilton 32).
  - c. By raising the admission standards for four-year institutions, students will be directed to shore up their competencies before entering these institutions, resulting in better academic performance and increased retention rates.
  - d. These results would allow the U.S. Department of Education’s goal to increase the rate at which students complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education, to be restored.
2. Significant Harm - Dropouts have debt but no degree.
  - a. Less dropouts due to inability to perform means less members of society caught in college debt.
  - b. According to Silla Brush of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, borrowers who graduate from college are twice as likely to be employed as borrowers who drop out, and 10 times less likely to default on their loans (Brush A20).
3. Significant Harm - The presence of remedial education in postsecondary education.
  - a. By raising the admission standards for four-year institutions, inevitably the percentage of enrolled students who need remediation classes will decrease significantly.
  - b. Institution can reallocate resources.
  - c. Student isn’t in school longer, accruing more debt.

4. Greater Good - Potential for Better Allocating Resources.
  - a. Professors who would normally be tied down in remediation classes will be able to be utilized elsewhere (in more sections of higher coursework, specialized classes, advising, and publishing). In addition, the “stigma” of teaching remedial courses would be effectively removed.
  - b. Institutional dollars that were put toward remedial courses could be rerouted to needs that would benefit the entire campus and the educational needs of the institution as a whole.
  - c. Taxpayers would no longer have to pay twice (once when paying for primary education and once when paying for state-funded higher education) for society’s students to learn information.
  
5. Significant Harm – A significant number of below par students in a class brings down the *entire* class
  - a. Less students needing remedial education means less frequent occurrence of curriculum being diluted to meet needs of remedial students.
  - b. Because the quality of education will no longer be at a diluted level, the value of college education will increase for all students.
  
6. Additional Benefits
  - a. Our plan will decrease the current trend of rapid depreciation of the Bachelor’s Degree.
  - b. Our plan will help to increase the United States’ standing in the global marketplace of education.
  - c. Our plan will also increase workforce competency, lending to the bettering of America’s standing in the global labor force.
    - i. “With manufacturing moving to the lowest-paying countries, America’s future competitiveness is inexorably linked to the knowledge industries,” notes Dr. Robert McCabe. “It has been forecast that 80 percent of new jobs will require some post-secondary education” (Hamilton 33).

### Summary

1. Today we have presented a case that meets all of the requirements of a policy case:
  - a. We have maintained topicality throughout the debate.
  - b. We have shown problems that are significant and inherent to the status quo.
    - i. High percentage of students failing to finish a four-year college degree.
      1. According to the Department of Education, this is clearly a goal failure.
      2. *The Journal of Higher Education* clearly links the taking of many remedial courses with lowered chances for graduation.
    - ii. Dropouts have debt but no degree.
      1. This harms the student who is saddled with debt and is 10 times more likely to default on a student loan.

2. Relevant because statistics indicate that only 1 in 3 students who take many remedial courses graduate in less than 8 years.
  - iii. The presence of remedial education in postsecondary education
    1. 40% of college students take remedial courses.
    2. This weighs upon the students who must spend more time in college, and the institutions that they attend during this time.
  - iv. Potential for Better Allocating Resources
    1. Professors are currently teaching remedial courses instead of more valuable, higher level courses.
    2. Institution dollars and taxpayer dollars are being spent to teach information that the student has already been taught once.
  - v. Below par students have the ability to bring down the curriculum of a classroom, causing harm to more than just the remedial students.
2. The Negative Team's presentation of a counter-plan shows that they admit these problems do exist, and they cannot completely refute them.
3. They have agreed with our plan's solvency as evidenced by their lack of effective refutation.
4. Yet they have failed to show:
  - a. That their plan has any solvency for the problems presented. In order to present a true policy case, they would have had to present arguments showing that their plan would meet each of the aforementioned problems. Yet they have not.
  - b. They have also failed to give any workability arguments—another element of a complete argument. Their plan is tremendously complex, and its provisions are carried out by the federal government (an inappropriate mechanism for the education system).
  - c. Because of their lack of solvency and workability arguments, they do not present a full counter-argument case.
5. The Negative Team's plan is effectively based on solving problems from the K-12 perspective by federally mandating change. Yet this strategy has been tried and proven ineffective over the last 20 years as evidenced by:
  - a. The Nation at Risk study of 1983.
  - b. Legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.
6. Our plan is workable as seen in similar policies implemented in the realm of collegiate athletics.
7. Our plan solves the problems mentioned.
8. Our case, even after much debate, contains all of the valid elements of a policy case.
9. Therefore, we beseech you to side with the Affirmative Team and adopt this much needed resolution.

Works Cited

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