

# Shaping the Future of Student Affairs by Listening to Community Members' Voices

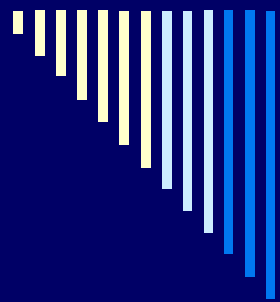
Presented at the Joint Convention of ACPA, College Student  
Educators, and NASPA, International and National  
Association for Student Personnel and Administrators

Our Power and Responsibility to Shape Education

Kasey Alpay and Penny A. Pasque

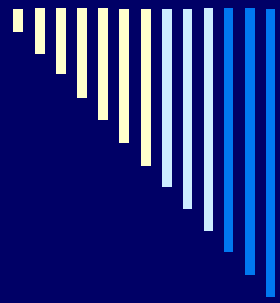
April 2, 2007

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# Agenda for Today

- Learn about the Access to Democracy Research Project
  - Small Group Discussions
    - Best practices about university – community partnerships and addressing perceived barriers to college.
  - Large Group discussions
    - What are some ways we can make change in student affairs to further address perceived barriers?
    - What are some ways in which you can gather research or evaluate information in order to make change on your campus or within your community?
  - Question & Answer
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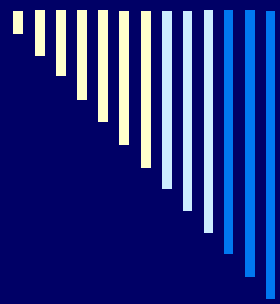
# Access to Democracy: The National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good

## Purpose of Research Project

Increase public awareness of access to higher education through community dialogues throughout the State of Michigan using the National Issues Forums deliberative dialogue model

(National Issues Forum: <http://www.nifi.org/forums/index.aspx>)

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## Background Regarding Approach

- One way to listen to the voices of community members and hear perceptions of college is to host community dialogues that are organized in collaboration with local community leaders (Mathews & McAfee, 2002).
- Working together with local community leaders' to create dialogue sessions helps increase attendance and make certain that the dialogue is focused on community needs (Daun Barnett & Bowman, 2005).
- By listening to the voices of community members regarding access for diverse student populations, we can create policies and procedures that will address barriers perceived by people who are often silenced in the academy (Green & Trent, 2005).

# Access to Democracy Research Design

## Dialogue Data Corpus

### Attitude Change

- Quant pre/post
- Qual quotes & themes that indicate change

### General Opinions

- Quan for policy briefs
- Qual for general themes

### Group Difference Across:

- Teachers, faculty, students
- Demo-graphics
- Communi-ties (both qual & quant)

### Community Profiles

- City / County demographics, GIS mapping, quan and qual data

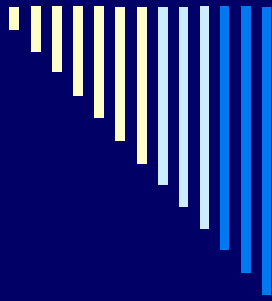
### Community Action Model

- The “how to” organize dialogues; a grounded theory approach

## Final Analysis / Report with all the results compiled together

- Example: Quantitative - Means about why people believe it is important for students to go to college – together with Qualitative – quotes about why people feel this way. Example: Compare across community portraits.

## Implications of the Overall Research Project Recommendations for Change



# Who is College for?

## Comparing the Approaches

### Approach One: Those Willing to Work For It

*Supporters of Approach 1 believe that any student can attend college, regardless of their lot in life. They may need to take a longer, more difficult path, but their hard work will pay off in the end.*

#### What Should be Done?

- **Adopt alternatives to race-based affirmative action.** Need-based alternatives are fairer than race-based plans.
- **Expand guaranteed student loan programs.** Federal support to pay for college while a student is in school is a wise investment in the nation's future human potential.
- **Increase support for community colleges and extension programs through four year colleges.** For many students, if college is not close to home or work, it is not a viable option.
- **Place greater emphasis on career exploration and development in high school.**
- **Recognize and give credit for the experience adult learners bring to the classroom.** Adult learners do not need to replicate what they have already learned on the job.
- **Offer course and college services beyond the traditional 8-5 workday.** Do not penalize adult students who must maintain a job while attending college.

#### Opposing Voices:

A student who graduates from an elite private university is likely to make more money and find a better job than someone who attends a local community college. Minority students, who are more likely to be enrolled in community colleges, will likely not fare as well economically or professionally as their white counterparts.

Opponents would also argue that the definition of "qualified" is subjective. Advanced Placement (AP), honors courses, and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are not available in all schools. These are not obstacles that can be overcome by simply working harder.

#### Costs and Consequences:

Cost can be prohibitive for poor students, however if everything is paid for them, students may lack the personal investment to finish. However, taking out loans to cover the cost of an education that exceeds a family's income can be a barrier even for the most dedicated young people.

### Approach Two: The Most Academically Qualified

*Supporters of Approach 2 believe that given our limited resources, the best investment for the country is in those students most likely to advance society and maintain America's competitive edge in the global marketplace.*

#### What Should be Done?

- **Admission to college should be based primarily on merit.** Admissions policies should be race- and gender-neutral, and preferences for children of alumni should be eliminated.
- **Increase merit-based scholarships.** These scholarships emphasize academic achievement regardless of personal background.
- **Implement a more demanding K-12 curriculum.** Only the most successful youths will continue on to college.
- **Improve standard measures of achievement.** It is necessary to have a standard by which all students can be compared.
- **Emphasize scientific literacy.** Many of today's jobs require a high degree of technical competence.
- **Provide additional support for private education.** Highly capable students cannot always afford high tuitions.

#### Opposing Voices:

In this system, the rich get richer and the poor remain poor. While women and minorities have made significant progress in education since the 1960's, they are still largely underrepresented in the nation's political leadership and in the influential and high paying professions like medicine and law. Affirmative action must be maintained and protected.

Further, standardized tests discriminate against women and minority students. These measures also fail to account for potential, determination, civic engagement, and abilities in the arts, athletics and entertainment.

#### Costs and Consequences:

Merit-based admissions policies are vital in matching students to institutions for which they are properly prepared. However, this practice allows inequalities in K-12 to be compensated for rather than being addressed.

### Approach Three: Everyone

*Supporters of Approach 3 believe that college education doesn't merely serve individuals; it benefits everyone by strengthening society. Educated people are more engaged citizens and contribute more to society.*

#### What Should be Done?

- **Support race- and need-based affirmative action programs.** We are highly segregated as a nation and need to actively work to eliminate inequality.
- **Diversify the college faculties** to reflect the racial, ethnic, gender, and physical ability differences of the incoming students.
- **Create a sliding scale for cost of tuition.** Students should be expected to pay a portion of the cost of their education, but it should be in proportion to their means.
- **Increase system wide capacity.** There needs to be enough seats in the classrooms to accommodate all interested students.
- **Clearly align state high school graduation requirements with college admissions standards.**
- **Make high quality education available to all students and all communities.** High school graduates should not be forced to choose between leaving their community and attending college.

#### Opposing Voices:

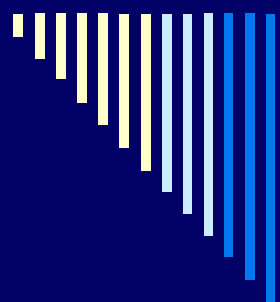
We have limited resources that must be divided among important social priorities such as health care, social security, K-12 education, and new concerns for our personal security. It is too expensive to allow everyone to go to college. Further, a college education isn't even necessary for most jobs in this country when you take into account on-the-job training.

Also, accepting less qualified students in to college will water down the system and lower the overall quality of education.

Lastly, it is not the role of college to teach citizenship. That is the role of the family, faith, and the community.

#### Costs and Consequences:

There are significant benefits to a highly educated population where individuals are better educated and more engaged with the democratic process, but at what cost? Are the benefits of educating more of our citizens worth cutting funding for other priorities or increasing taxes to afford it?



# Access to Democracy: Participants

Over 1,000 Participants in Michigan:

K-12 teachers

Spiritual leaders

Parents

Migrant farm workers

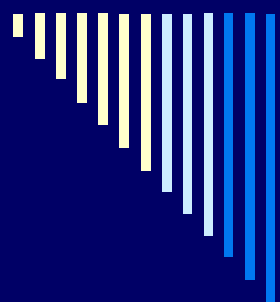
GED and college students

Educational administrators

City leaders

Tribe leaders

Other community members



# Access to Democracy: Participants

## □ Gender Breakdown

Female 56.9% · Male 43% · Transgender 0.1%

## □ Racial Breakdown

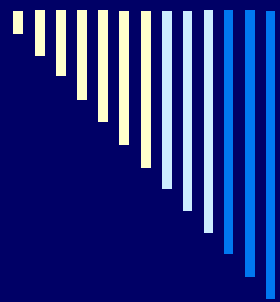
Caucasian	62%
African American	25%
Multi-racial	6%
Native American/American Indian	4%
Hispanic, Latino or Chicano	2%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2%
Other	1%

# Access to Democracy: Communities

## Targeted Counties

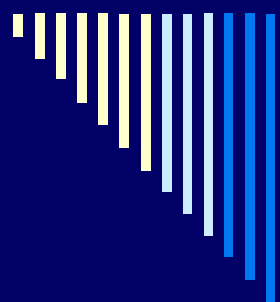
- Jackson
- Washtenaw
- Wayne and Oakland  
(=Greater Detroit)
- Chippewa





## Access to Democracy: Methods

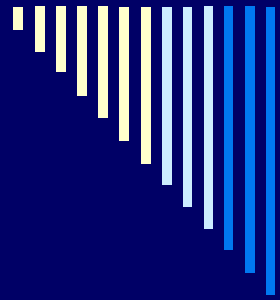
- ❑ Sixty-nine one-hour dialogues were led by trained moderators
- ❑ Dialogues were recorded and transcribed in a word-for-word format
- ❑ Transcripts were cleaned for confidentiality purposes
- ❑ Research themes emerged directly from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1999)
- ❑ Triangulation of data for goodness (Jones, Torres, Arminio, 2006)



# Access to Democracy: Research Findings

## The Barriers to Attending College

- Unlevel Playing Field
- Hierarchy in the System of Higher Education
- Problems with Measurement
- Access for Everyone is a Negative Thing

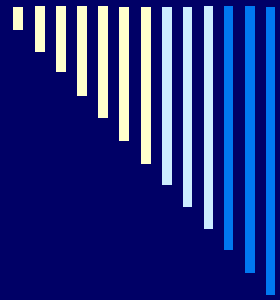


## Barrier: Unlevel Playing Field

Racism, classism, ageism, money and personal support

“Society is set up in particularly urban areas, low socioeconomic, whatever you want to look at it, until you fix society you can not expect it to be a even playing field, you can have the same school, but since society is set up -- and it is set up -- and you have to understand that before you start saying that everyone is equal because they are not. They do not start off the same, they don't perform the same, they don't end up the same.”

(Woman, Teacher, Livonia)



# Barrier:

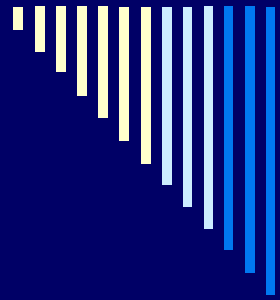
## Hierarchy in the System of HE

The established hierarchy, or pecking order, in the system, which either serves a good function in society or has negative consequences

### Good

“To say that anybody who wants to go to medical school can and anybody who wants to walk around U of M medical school putting IVs in people can because we want open access to all? I think there have to be criteria. I don’t think it’s test scores, but at some point you have to say, “Not everybody gets to do everything if, for the first 22 years of their life, they don’t have the background to lead up to that.”

(Man, Teacher, Livonia)



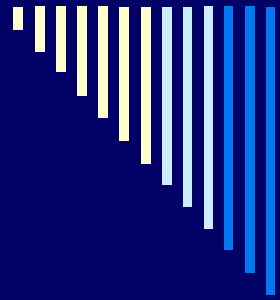
## Barrier: Hierarchy in the System of HE

The established hierarchy, or pecking order, in the system, which either serves a good function in society or has negative consequences

### Bad

“I know that some students get into certain college’s simply because of their last name, it’s not because they are willing to work hard. In fact, they haven’t really worked hard at much of anything because everything has been so easily given to them, but yet they make it into the college, because that is where my father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather has gone, so I will go there.”

(Woman, Graduate Student, Jackson)

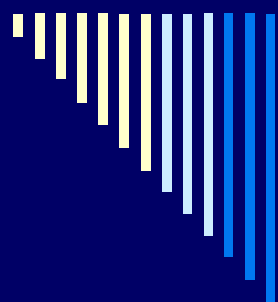


## Barrier: Problems with Measurement

Issues such as the validity of the SAT, ACT and other standardized tests as well as hard work, readiness, and maturity, which are not measured by standardized tests

“I think what we are measuring with the academic indicators is not the only selection of college entrance. You know? Believe me, it is hard for me to say, because that is what I spend all of my time doing, but I know that the students who are exceptionally good at taking tests and all of the academic things, are not only people who are going to change the world, so I don't want to limit it to that.”

(Woman, Teacher, Sault St. Marie)



## Barrier: Access for Everyone is Negative

Participants in support of limiting access to HE and creating barriers to college for some

“I don’t think college is for everybody. There has to be some sort of desire, some sort of -- and not necessarily – ‘I need to go to college go get a job,’ but you have to want to learn. You have to want to expand your academic horizon. There has to be that need. You can’t just [say] I am going to college because that is the next step. That is why I went to college because I was told to go to college my whole life. That is why when I as there I was switching majors and bumming around because I didn’t have any goal in mind- just to finish. So, no, I don’t think that college is for everybody.”

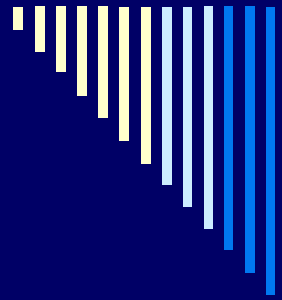
(Man, Community Member, Detroit)



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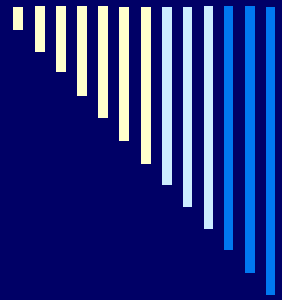
# Roundtable Discussion

- Introduce ourselves in small groups.
  - Questions for discussions:
    - How are campuses (and how are you) already addressing the barriers identified by the community members in the Access to Democracy Research Project?
    - What are the ways that student affairs professionals and academics can make change in order to address the perceived barriers to college?
    - What are the ways in which we may include community members in gathering research or evaluation information in order to make future change on campus and with local communities?
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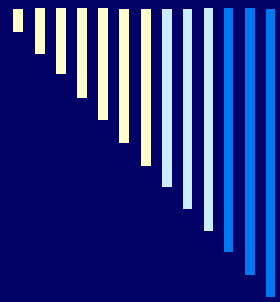
# Report Out





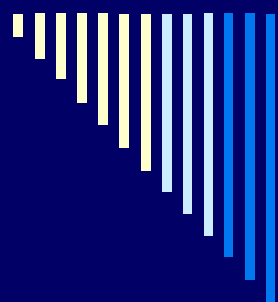
# Report Out





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**National Forum on**

**Higher Education for the Public Good**

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