

# POLICY NOTES

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## In this Issue

Higher education was once a luxury, a prerequisite for success only in a relatively small number of jobs held by a global elite. But in the technology-driven economy of the 21st century, education beyond secondary school has become a necessity for nearly anyone who wants a comfortable life. Postsecondary education enables those born into poverty to escape it, and no country can rise from poverty to affluence without

*(continued on page 11)*

## Optimizing Talent — Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide

### Higher Education and Lifelong Learning

Education is an essential building block of prosperity. Without it, children born into poverty cannot grow up to do better than their parents, and the countries they live in cannot begin the long climb toward affluence. The more educated a nation's people, the better its results on such measures of human welfare as infant mortality, life expectancy, political stability and economic productivity. "Education is central to an individual's ability to realize his or her potential, and to a nation's social and economic well-being and development," ETS Senior Vice President **Michael Nettles** said during a recent seminar on education and social mobility cosponsored by ETS and the Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS). "We believe firmly in the power of education to equalize opportunities and improve mobility throughout a society."

Decades ago, the economic rewards of education were attainable with schooling that ended after high school, or even earlier. In that mid-20th-century world, blue-collar manufacturing jobs were plentiful, at least for men, and they paid enough to lift a family into the middle class, said seminar speaker **Anthony Carnevale**, Director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. Skills were acquired on the job; postsecondary education was a luxury for the few, not a necessity for the many.

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*"Education is central to an individual's ability to realize his or her potential, and to a nation's social and economic well-being and development."*

— *Michael Nettles, Senior Vice President, ETS*

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But in the early 1970s, Carnevale said, the economy began to change. As computer technology spread, repetitive jobs were automated, and the jobs that remained demanded such higher-order skills as creativity and problem solving. As a result, in today's economy, postsecondary education or training is an essential gateway to jobs paying a middle-class salary. "Without some form of tertiary education beyond high school, people are doomed, really, to a very difficult life," said seminar speaker **James Applegate**, Vice President of the Lumina Foundation. "The income gap that we talk about a lot in the United States — it's a college-education-opportunity gap." Just as higher education has become essential to individual economic well-being, so too has the existence of a substantial cadre of workers with postsecondary education become essential to the economic success of nations. And the obstacles to creating a corps of well-educated workers have become substantial blocks in the way of social progress.

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*"The income gap that we talk about a lot in the United States — it's a college-education-opportunity gap."*

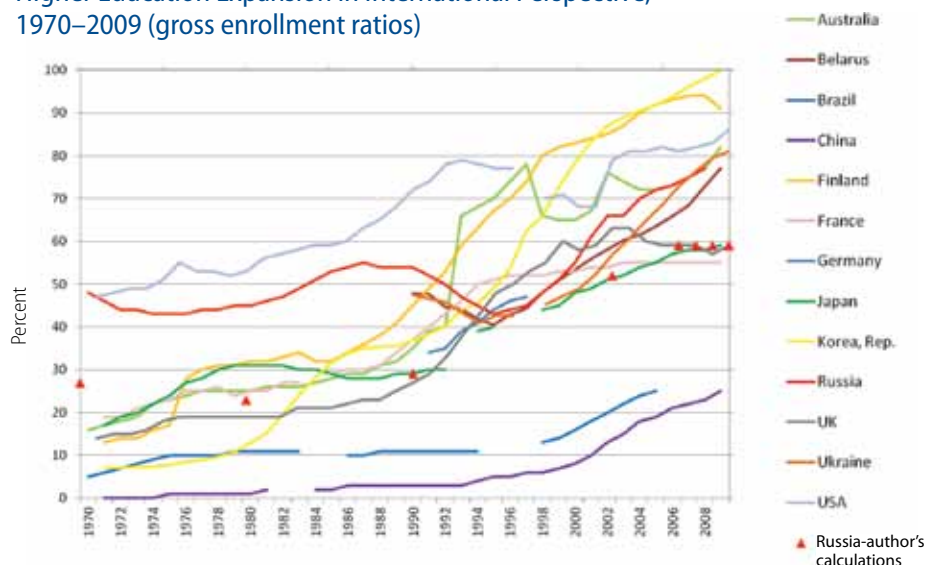
— *James Applegate, Vice President, Lumina Foundation*

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The global importance of postsecondary education and the policy implications of expanding mass access to it were the subject of the ETS/SGS seminar "Optimizing Talent – Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide: Higher Education and Lifelong Learning." The meeting, which was supported by the DeVry Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, was the third in a series of joint ETS/SGS seminars on education and social mobility around the world. The first seminar, held in 2010, laid out an agenda for the rest of the series, and the second, in 2011, looked at K–12 education worldwide. The latest seminar, held October 2–7, 2012, at the Salzburg Global Seminars in Salzburg, Austria, brought together more than four dozen researchers, administrators, policymakers and advocates, citizens of 30 countries on six continents.

In many nations, seminar participants noted, enrollment in higher education has exploded as governments have come to understand the importance of an educated workforce.

**Higher Education Expansion in International Perspective, 1970–2009 (gross enrollment ratios)**



Source: World Bank/UNESCO data. For author's calculations: Russian statistical committee data, 20–24 age cohort (Smolentseva, 2012).

In Chile, tertiary enrollment rates more than doubled in a generation, from 15.3 percent of the population in 1990 to 39.6 percent in 2009. China tripled its number of tertiary graduates in just the past decade. Policymakers around the world have set ambitious goals for increasing higher education participation even further. By 2020, the Obama administration wants 60 percent of American adults to hold a postsecondary degree, up from less than 40 percent now — an additional 8.2 million college degrees, said seminar speaker **Sharon Thomas Parrott**, a senior vice president of DeVry University. Globally, doubling young people's higher education enrollment from the current rate of 30 percent to the desired rate of 60 percent will mean enrolling an additional 180 million people, said seminar speaker **Mauricio Garcia**, a vice president of DeVry's Brazil operations. "It's a huge, huge challenge," Garcia said.

Magnifying the challenge is the failure to translate the steep jumps in postsecondary enrollment into similar improvements in equity, seminar speakers said. "Even though we've seen rapid enrollment growth in all parts of the world, tertiary education continues to be elitist, with strong disparities in both access and success in rich, middle-income and low-income countries," said seminar

speaker **Jamil Salmi**, a former World Bank official. Even as Chile vastly increased its tertiary enrollment, for example, the gap between the attendance rates of the richest and poorest quintiles widened, from 35 percentage points in 1990 to 62 percentage points in 2009, Salmi said.

In Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, 80 percent of the people enrolled in tertiary education come from the top 20 percent of the population, said Nettles, of ETS, and only 2 percent come from the bottom 40 percent. Similar gaps exist in the United States, where 80 percent of wealthy 24-year-olds hold four-year college degrees, but only 10 percent of the poorest do, said Applegate, of the Lumina Foundation. "In the United States, we do an excellent job of educating wealthy people," he said.

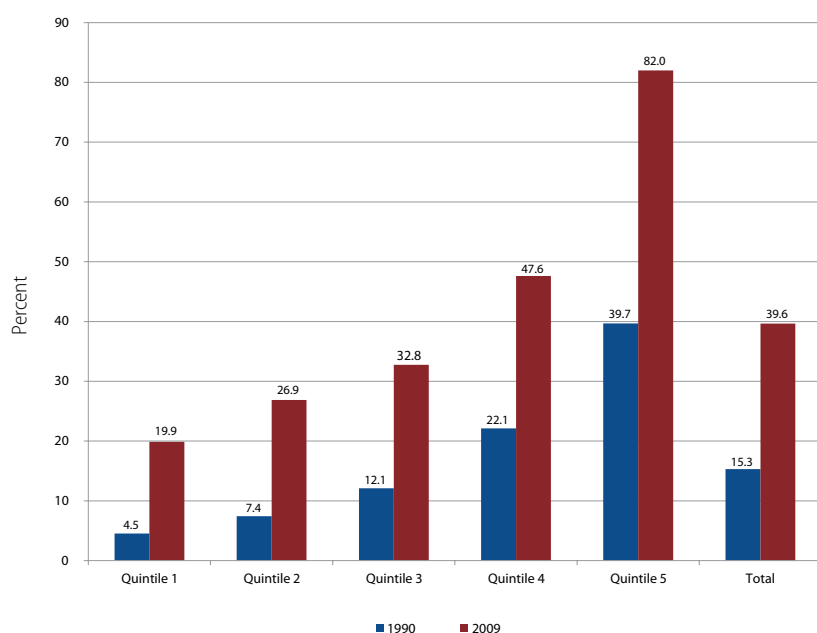
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**Enrollment Rate in Chile by Income Quintiles, 1990–2009**



Source: CASEN Survey, respective years.

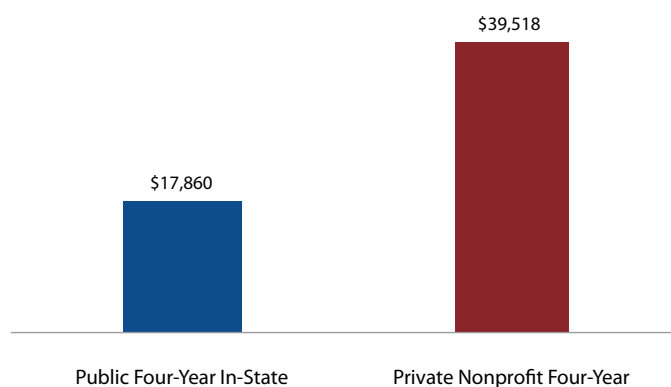
Disparities based on race, gender and ethnicity also persist worldwide, seminar speakers said. In Israel, Arabs make up 19 percent of the population but only 11 percent of university enrollment, Salmi said. In Romania, completion rates for tertiary education are 29 percent among the general population but only 0.7 percent among the Roma. In post-apartheid South Africa, 60 percent of White students, but only 12 percent of Black students, enroll in higher education, said seminar speaker **Zena Richards**, who runs an outreach program for high school students at the University of the Witwatersrand; also, more than half of those Black university

students leave without graduating. “These stats are really unacceptable in terms of our own mobility as a country,” Richards said. Even when enrollment numbers look promising, they may not tell the whole story, Salmi added. In many countries, female enrollment in higher education is greater than male enrollment, “but that doesn’t mean that the battle is won,” he said — women are still channeled into less prestigious institutions and steered toward traditionally female areas of study, while men dominate academic leadership positions.

## Shifting the burden

What keeps students out of postsecondary education? Often, the barriers are financial. In many countries, a higher education is an expensive education. In the United States, noted Nettles, of ETS, the cost of tuition, room and board averages more than \$17,000 a year at a public university and more than \$39,000 a year at a private, four-year college.

**Average Price of U.S. Four-Year Colleges and Universities, 2012–2013**



*Source: College Board®, Advocacy and Policy Center, Trends in College Pricing*

For the poorest 20 percent of the population in southern Arizona, the net cost of a public university education in 2005 equaled 73 percent of family income, said former World Bank official Salmi — up from 59 percent in 1992. With economic pressures squeezing much of the world,

governments are cutting their outlays by shifting more of the cost of higher education onto students and their families. The Irish government recently reintroduced university fees after decades without them, and in 2012, the Hungarian government cut state-funded seats in higher education by 20 percent, said seminar speaker **Cecile Hoareau**, a research fellow at the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands and project manager at the non-governmental organization Empower European Universities. In the United States, the results of the shift away from public funding are clear: nearly two-thirds of American students graduating from private, four-year colleges in 2009–2010 carried an average \$28,000 in debt, Nettles said. Spiraling college costs have sparked recent student protests in places as disparate as Chile, Great Britain and Quebec.

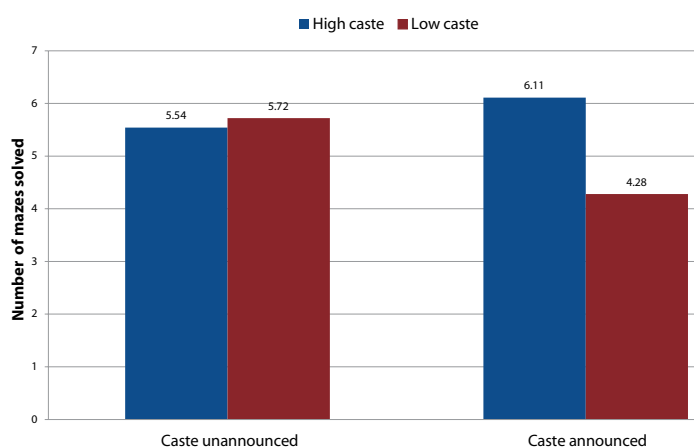
At the same time, governments and institutions of higher education around the world have launched an array of programs designed to break down financial barriers to postsecondary education. In some countries, public universities charge no tuition; in others, the disadvantaged can qualify for need-based grants and loans. In Australia, although the government pays about three-quarters of the cost of a university education, graduates contribute the rest via a tax tied to income: they owe nothing until they are earning an above-average salary, and payments never exceed 7 percent of income, said seminar participant Shelagh Whittleston, the education manager of Australian Education International, an arm of the Australian government. Even smaller accommodations can make a difference: In South Korea, during the two days of the all-important college entrance exam, elite Seoul National University offers students free housing near the testing site, said seminar speaker **Hi-Won Yoon**, an education scholar who is a former administrator at the university.



“We don’t want to lose someone because she has to pay \$200 for one night or [has] nowhere to sleep,” Yoon said. “We want our applicants fully, fully, fully exposed to show their abilities.”

But money isn’t the only obstacle keeping the less advantaged from embarking on higher education; socialization plays a major role, as well. In India, said Salmi, the former World Bank official, social scientists discovered that lower-caste primary school students performed less well on cognitive tasks when their caste was publicly announced ahead of time, apparently internalizing social expectations of failure.

### Effects of Indian Caste Identity on Academic Performance



Source: K. Hoff and P. Pandley, *Belief Systems and Durable Inequalities: An experimental investigation of Indian caste*, p. 13. *Policy Research Working Paper*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2004.

Similar pressures play a role in other countries, speakers said. “It’s feeling that the university is a social sphere that is very highly stratified, they don’t belong there,” said seminar participant Moushira Elgeziri, a Ford Foundation consultant in Egypt. “These factors are invisible and subtle, and we don’t talk a lot about them, but in the developing countries, status consciousness is a very important factor in social mobility.” To combat that subtle sense of exclusion, the University of the Witwatersrand in

South Africa reaches out to talented but disadvantaged high school students, offering academic preparation, career development and mentoring, as well as workshops for their families. By bringing students to campus, said university Project Manager Richards, the program aims to demystify the university’s urban surroundings, as well as its library, dorms and lecture rooms, for disadvantaged students from rural areas.

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— Hi-Won Yoon, former Director,  
Centre for Multicultural Education, Seoul National University

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The students enrolled in Richards’ program face another obstacle common to disadvantaged students worldwide: primary and secondary schooling far inferior in quality to that received by their wealthier peers. In South Africa, Richards said, apartheid-era laws mandating lower funding for Black schools have been repealed, but thousands of schools still lack sports facilities, science laboratories — even electricity and running water. “To a large extent, equity issues in tertiary education are just an extension of what happens or doesn’t happen at the lower levels of education, reflecting structural barriers at that level,” said Salmi, the former World Bank official. Gaps open up even before formal schooling starts, he said. In the United States, research shows that impoverished 4-year-olds already lag 18 months behind more affluent peers. By the time such children are old enough for higher education, they are far less likely to win admission, especially to top-ranked institutions. In the United Kingdom, top-flight universities “are peopled by, for the most part, students from upper socioeconomic groups who have been born with a silver spoon in their mouths and have had a very privileged home background and a very privileged secondary school background,” said seminar speaker

**Tessa Blackstone**, a researcher and former university vice chancellor who is a Life Peer in Britain's House of Lords.

Better training for teachers is crucial to ensuring greater equity in primary and secondary schooling, seminar participants agreed. In the United States, the accreditation of teacher-training programs, which used to focus on inputs, such as course syllabi, now focuses on learning outcomes, said seminar speaker **Deborah Eldridge**, Senior Vice President at the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE is in the process of expanding its work internationally, as other countries express interest in the quality-improvement process that rigorous teacher-training standards can help spur. Research shows that the expectations teachers form about their students as early as the first two weeks of kindergarten can shape long-term outcomes for children, Eldridge said. "Even in the high-needs classrooms, there are teachers who are extremely effective at raising student achievement," she said. "We should not be talking about optimizing talent to close educational and social mobility gaps without also demanding accountability for the quality of teachers and the programs that prepare them." Still, while early intervention in children's lives provides the surest route to success, "that doesn't mean that we should give up on those who are already in the pipeline," said Salmi, the former World Bank official. Institutions of higher education must learn to seek out students with unrealized ability, not just demonstrated achievement. "You have to grow talent; you can't mine for it," said Richards, of the University of the Witwatersrand. "It requires a belief in human potential."

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## Opening the gates

Seminar speakers agreed that to expand access to more students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, governments and institutions of higher education must also be willing to change the way they do business. Traditional university education and the governmental systems designed to support it are organized around the needs of young people with few family or work responsibilities. But expanding access to higher education will inevitably mean that these traditional students make up a shrinking proportion of universities' clientele. "No one can simply continue to educate the same traditional college students, the 18-year-olds straight out of high school who have time and resources to attend a traditional four-year residential college program," said Thomas Parrott, the DeVry University executive. "The U.S. also needs to educate the nontraditional student, the first in their family to go to college, the recent immigrant, the working parent, urban and rural students, and underrepresented minorities, particularly in the African-American and Latino communities." Seminar speakers said that to encourage such nontraditional students to enroll in postsecondary education, national education systems need to adopt flexible new approaches that serve the interests of learners rather than the entrenched preferences of politicians and universities. Workers should be able to earn credentials that transfer easily among employers and even countries. National education systems, drawing on such models as the American community college system, should make it easier for students whose schooling has derailed to get back on track later in life, and these older students should qualify for as much government funding as younger students do. But seminar participants said that student-centered flexibility remains a work in progress even in Europe, where the 13-year-old Bologna Process has sought to standardize degree programs across the continent, making it easier for students to move among countries and universities. European countries still see transnational mobility of their brightest students as a "brain drain," said seminar speaker **Georg Winckler**,

former rector of the University of Vienna, rather than as productive “brain circulation,” with students both leaving and returning. “Higher education systems are too much dominated by national interests,” Winckler said.

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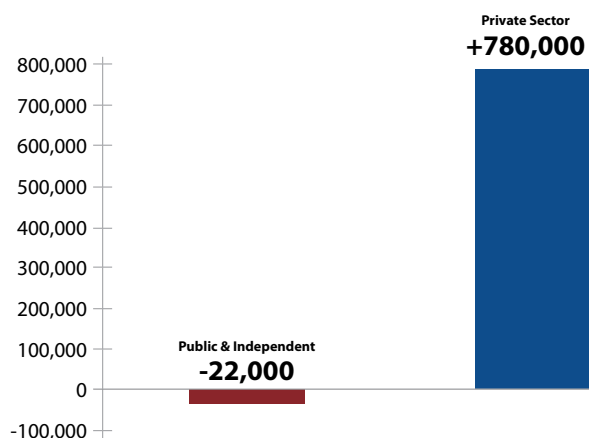
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Just as governments need to adopt new approaches designed to benefit students, so too do universities themselves need to embrace a flexible, student-centered approach, seminar speakers said. At DeVry, class schedules are designed to accommodate nontraditional students with job and family responsibilities: classes meet in the evenings, over the weekends and online, and faculty members’ first priority is not research but teaching, Thomas Parrott said. “Our system is set up with our students in mind — their convenience, their needs, what’s best for them,” she said. Indeed, nontraditional student enrollments in private-sector undergraduate institutions have grown substantially in the United States in the past couple decades.

#### Growth in Undergraduate Enrollment in the United States, Age 25 and above, 1995–2009



Source: IPEDS, Eduventures

Even more radical is the three-year-old University of the People, which offers tuition-free college courses entirely online to students around the world, including those whose geographical isolation, poverty, disability or gender prevents them from attending brick-and-mortar universities. “We open the gates to higher education for everyone,” said seminar speaker **Shai Reshef**, the university’s president. Using open-source technology, free online content and 2,900 volunteer professors, the University of the People has offered business and computer classes to 1,500 students worldwide and hopes to expand to 5,000 by 2015, Reshef said. Students’ costs come to only \$100 per end-of-course exam, he said, and even this modest sum can be covered through scholarships.

The for-profit and online models that DeVry and the University of the People represent are often viewed with skepticism or even hostility by traditional nonprofit institutions of higher education, but seminar speakers argued that increasing the ranks of the world’s educated requires an openness to new approaches. “We are not an alternative to any institution that you represent. We are the alternative for no alternative,” Reshef said. “I’m talking about 100 million people who do not have school. They should come to me. Those who have an alternative should go to the alternative.” With millions of people requiring higher education, “we cannot afford to give up any segment,” said speaker Garcia, of DeVry Brazil. “Everybody needs to be in the same boat.”

### Equity vs. efficiency

Essential though it may be, the effort to seek out disadvantaged and nontraditional students, enroll them in higher education and ensure that they complete their studies raises new questions, casting into relief the tensions among the competing goals of efficiency, quality and equity. The global economic retrenchment has made the high cost of mass higher education expansion especially pressing and sharpened the question of who should pay for an education that is both

a private good and a public good, benefiting both the individual student and the larger society. “Investing in excellence is not cheap,” said Richards of the University of the Witwatersrand. “It’s resource-intensive. It has to be targeted.” Still, the resources are apparently available: One-tenth of 1 percent of the money spent bailing out European banks ensnared in the ongoing debt crisis would pay for a year of higher education for every European student, estimated Hoareau, of Empower European Universities. “It’s just a question of where does the money go and what’s the most useful for the economy,” she said.

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— Madlen Serban, Director, European Training Foundation

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The global budget squeeze makes it essential to seek increased efficiency in the provision of higher education, seminar participants said, not only by lowering costs but also by ensuring that students complete their studies in a reasonable amount of time and gain marketable skills. “Students don’t go to DeVry to major in philosophy or history or political science — not that there’s anything wrong with that,” said DeVry executive Thomas Parrott, who holds two history degrees. “But at DeVry we offer programs that lead to a career in high-demand fields,” including nursing, computer technology and health information systems.

Efficiency also demands new credentialing frameworks that give learners credit for skills developed in non-school settings such as the workplace, said seminar speaker **Madlen Serban**, Director of the European Training Foundation. “This is about recognition of prior learning and recognition of experience,” Serban said. Making such new qualifications easily transferable from country to country is especially important for aging European societies that need to import workers but are unwilling to shoulder the social and economic costs of permanently absorbing

those immigrants into their societies, she said. “If we want to fill the skills gaps with immigrants, then we have to make visible the skills and experience gained during the immigration period,” Serban said. “Let’s make sure that Europe will take full advantage of the talent it wants, but equally that the country of origin will offer facilities for welcoming back those that need to come back.”

But the drive for efficiency is sometimes in tension with the imperatives to increase equity and maintain quality, seminar speakers said. The easiest way for universities to ensure that students pass their classes, require few expensive support services and graduate on time is to exclude those who are more likely to fail — precisely those disadvantaged, underprepared students who the world needs so desperately to educate. The efficiency push increases the stratification of educational institutions, with top-flight schools serving the wealthy and well-prepared while lower-ranked institutions cater to the poor and members of minority groups. The disadvantaged risk winding up with a higher education of such low quality that they will never catch up to the advantaged. “If you allow a long tail of poor institutions to grow, I bet my bottom dollar that they will be full of students who come from much poorer backgrounds than those in the best places,” said Blackstone, the British peer. “I don’t want working-class students to go to institutions that have less money to pay their academics, less money to provide good laboratories, less money to have decent libraries and online facilities, than the top research institutions. That is discrimination against the poor.”

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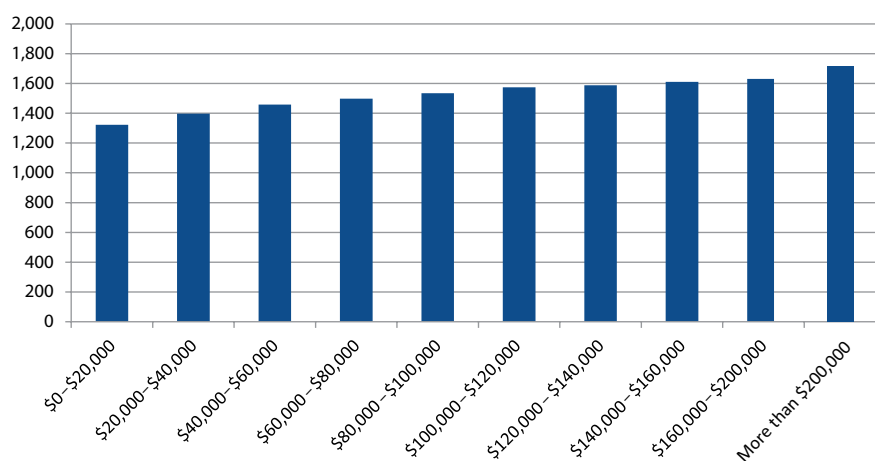
To avoid such pitfalls, speakers said, governments must focus on creating a world-class higher education system, not just a few world-class institutions. Every South Korean knows which of the country's universities are most selective and which are less so, said Yoon, the former administrator at top-flight Seoul National University. But this perceived rank ordering is better understood as a division of labor within the higher education system, she said, with some institutions serving faster learners and other serving slower learners. "It's a matter of practicability," she said. "An espresso cup is smaller than a cappuccino cup, but that [doesn't] mean it's less expensive or less important." Funding can be targeted to encourage equity efforts, said Georgetown's Carnevale, with extra money going to institutions that successfully educate the disadvantaged. "You weight students differently in the system," he said. "You simply don't allow the system to skim cream." But other seminar participants worried that the efficiency push might erode quality not just at the bottom but also at the top, sacrificing the cultivation of top-flight talent and of the institutions that nurture it in a drive to serve the masses. "We have to keep elite institutions. We have to keep those institutions where research is top, top, top," said seminar speaker **Eduardo Marçal Grilo**, a former minister of education in Portugal, who serves on the board of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. "And to be top, top, top, you have to concentrate the human resources and the financial resources in those institutions."

Seminar participants also wondered if the emphasis on education as a route into the workforce risked reducing a fundamental human activity to just another economic commodity. Education is not just "providing manpower for the economy," Grilo said. "Education is providing good citizens for the society."

## Unintended consequences

Even as politicians and reformers seek to open higher education to the disadvantaged, initiatives intended to increase equity do not always succeed in doing so. In some countries that have abolished tuition in an effort to expand access, coveted spots in free public universities go disproportionately to wealthier students, whose families can afford the excellent primary and secondary schooling necessary to qualify for admission. At Brazil's free, public University of Sao Paulo, 84 percent of the university's applicants come from public high schools, but 70 percent of the entering students come from private schools, said Salmi, the former World Bank official. Ironically, taxpayer-funded university tuition can end up meaning that "you have the entire society paying for the rich," he said, while lower-income students foot the bill for their tuition at private universities. Similarly, entrance exams — often touted as an unbiased, meritocratic way to open higher education to talented students from all social backgrounds — can end up favoring the affluent. In France, "you have an exam which on paper looks fair — it's about math, it's about language," Salmi said. "But the truth is that children from the richer families are better prepared." In the United States, the SAT® test is both a meritocratic exam and a gauge of social advantage, said Georgetown's Carnevale.

Mean Combined SAT Scores by Family Income, 2012



Source: College Board

"In the end, it really becomes a way to launder social inequality — that is, to make it acceptable, to give it a scientific basis," he said.

The unintended consequences of such equity measures suggest a sobering possibility — that open societies can never achieve full educational equity, because the affluent will always find a way to maintain their edge, increasing their spending on education in an effort to reinforce their children's advantage in the labor market. Between 1994 and 2009, ETS's Nettle said, every social group in Britain increased its level of university attendance, but higher socioeconomic groups outperformed lower ones by the same amount each year, locking achievement gaps in place and blocking social mobility. Social science theories offer a way of understanding this phenomenon, said seminar speaker **Anna Smolentseva**, a sociologist at Moscow's National Research University: higher education can be seen as a "positional good" — i.e., its value depends upon others having less of it. "Competition for a fixed number of positional goods at each level of advantage is a zero-sum game, where one individual wins only at the expense of another," Smolentseva said.

That insight may explain why it is so difficult to close the achievement and mobility gaps that plague countries around the world, seminar participants speculated. "The collective will is not there, universally, for us to get to equity," said Thomas Parrott, of DeVry University. "I think there are a lot of people invested in inequity." Capitalism itself militates against equity, Georgetown's Carnevale argued, because the marketplace distributes its rewards unequally, and wealth creation requires the accumulation of capital. "Changing the structure of opportunity in modern, democratic, capitalist societies is a revolutionary act," he said. "You're running against the grain. So it is something that requires politics."

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— Anthony Carnevale, Director, Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University

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The ETS/SGS seminars aim to start conversations that may ultimately spur new policy initiatives, seminar organizers said. And the seminars are not the only such effort. In October 2013, the World Congress on Access to Postsecondary Education, sponsored by the non-governmental European Access Network, will be held in Montreal. The 2013 World Congress — two more are planned in 2015 and 2017 — aims to bring together policymakers, educators, employers and students in a worldwide alliance dedicated to expanding higher education opportunities. "We want to build the economic, political and social case for improving education pathways and outcomes," said seminar participant **Frances Ferrier**, Executive Director of the European Access Network. "And we want to use that case to engage others in our collective agenda for change." Among those who plan to take an active role are student unions, which hope to organize discussion forums around the world in advance of the World Congress. In 2012, student leaders from around the world met in London to call for greater access, opportunity and student empowerment, said seminar speaker **Stephan Steinbach**, a civil engineering student active in the Austrian and European student unions. "There wouldn't be strong talk about social mobility in Europe without students," said seminar speaker **Florian Kaiser**, a psychology student involved in German and European student associations. "We play a huge part in this."

The work is crucial, seminar participants said. "Why is equity so important? The first answer is, of course, for moral reasons, for social justice," said Salmi, the former World Bank official. "But it's also about loss of talent. If you have millions of people with high potential who are denied

opportunities, they will not contribute to economic and social development.” The World Bank estimates that the lack of opportunity for Roma people in just four countries — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Serbia and Romania — translates into a productivity loss of five billion euros, he said. Research shows that countries with more equity in higher education attainment do better economically, said Hoareau, of Empower European Universities. “The more equity you have, the richer you are in general,” she said. Despite the obvious causality question — Does equity lead to greater wealth, or does greater wealth foster equity? — the existence of the relationship makes a strong case for pro-equity policies, she said.

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*“The more equity you have, the richer you are in general.”*

*— Cecile Hoareau, Research Fellow, University of Maastricht*

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Seminar participants acknowledged that working for equity in higher education is difficult, sometimes discouragingly so. “Unequal societies with vast discrepancies in wealth, in income, large numbers of children growing up in poverty, extensive unemployment, inadequate housing, huge differences in access to proper health care, do create almost insurmountable barriers,” said Blackstone, the British peer. But she urged persistence nonetheless. “None of us should ever give up fighting for a just cause,” she said, “however difficult the problems that we face might seem, however high the barriers we might have to leap.”

## *In this Issue*

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vastly expanding college access for its citizens. For both individuals and nations, higher education is essential to success in the competitive global marketplace.

Yet even as the world economy demands that postsecondary education be made available to the masses, in country after country it remains an institution largely serving the elite; from North America to South Africa, Chile to Romania, the affluent attend universities and earn degrees in far greater numbers than the poor. To increase access to higher education, and to enable students to succeed once they enroll, educators and policymakers must dismantle the barriers that stand in the way, both financial and non-financial. Around the world, an array of existing programs — from income-based student-loan repayment to university outreach programs directed at disadvantaged high school students — aim to overcome those obstacles.

But expanding access is not the end of the story. Reform efforts themselves raise new questions — about how to pay for big increases in postsecondary enrollment, how to promote efficiency in higher education without sacrificing quality, and how to ensure that equity initiatives do not inadvertently provide more advantages to the already advantaged. Despite these complications, however, the battle must be fought; efforts to expand mobility through higher education are crucial not only as a matter of social justice but also as an essential element of economic growth.

The struggle to expand higher education access and to maximize its potential to improve lives was the subject of “Optimizing Talent – Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide: Higher Education and Lifelong Learning,” a recent seminar cosponsored by ETS and the Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS) and supported by the DeVry Foundation and the Lumina Foundation.



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## *In this Issue*

*(continued from page 11)*

The meeting was the third in a series of joint ETS/SGS seminars on education and social mobility around the world; the first, held in 2010, laid out an agenda for the rest of the series, and the second, in 2011, examined K–12 education worldwide.

The latest seminar, held October 2–7, 2012, in Salzburg, Austria, brought together more than four dozen researchers, administrators, policymakers and advocates from around the world. Sixteen of the participants made formal or informal presentations, and introductory remarks were offered by Lumina Foundation Vice President **James Applegate**; ETS Senior Vice President **Michael Nettles**; SGS Vice President **Clare Shine**; and **Jacqueline**

**Woods**, Senior Partnerships Advisor at the DeVry Foundation. **Gerben van Lent**, an Executive Director at ETS Global, served as rapporteur, and small-group discussions were moderated by Applegate; Woods; **Frances Ferrier**, Executive Director of the European Access Network; **Zena Richards**, Project Manager at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa; and **Hanne Smidt Sodergard**, Senior Advisor at the European University Association.

More information about the conference, including audio of the formal presentations and PowerPoint® slides, is available at [www.salzburgglobal.org/go/495](http://www.salzburgglobal.org/go/495).