



Sent: April 29, 2010

Subject: The Educational Achievement Gap: A critical issue for all TDI members, plus a federal grant opportunity, call for submissions, upcoming conferences and more

The Educational Achievement Gap

In this missive, we can only touch on a few web-accessible resources and information, but we think these offer you some pretty good ways to (1) get and stay informed, (2) start a dialogue that leads to **change on your campus and in your community**.

According to the [Lumina Foundation](#),

Educational opportunity in the United States is not equally available to all Americans. More than 30 percent of white, non-Hispanic American adults have at least four years of college, but only 18 percent of African Americans and 12 percent of Hispanics have reached the same level of attainment. Because the average income of Americans with a four-year degree is \$43,000 per year, compared to \$27,000 for those who possess a high school diploma, this chronic gap in educational attainment contributes to the disparities in income between racial and ethnic groups. This issue is of growing importance as the proportion of the population from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education grows rapidly. The United States is projected to become a majority minority country by 2050. Of the projected U.S. population growth of 56 million between 2000 and 2020, 46 million will be members of minority groups.

As labor economist Tony Carnevale has argued, higher education attainment has become the only reliable route to the middle class. This has implications beyond earnings potential—almost 95 percent of college graduates have employer-provided health insurance, while only 77 percent of high school graduates have coverage. Likewise, 90 percent of college graduates have employer-funded retirement funds, compared to 81 percent of high school graduates and 53 percent of high school dropouts. The consequences of not succeeding in higher education are increasingly detrimental, and it is a fact that these consequences fall disproportionately on members of groups underrepresented in higher education."

Several national organizations are dedicated to eliminating the achievement gap:

An [April 2010 report](#) from the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) reports that, contrary to popular belief, the lowest performing high schools are not necessarily large, public, and urban. Low performing high schools are scattered nationally. Over 50% of the low performing high schools serve fewer than 1000 students, and one in eleven is a charter school. What low performing schools have in common is the high number of poor and minority students attending them. Eighty-four percent of these schools is in a high poverty community and 28% of the nation's students of color are enrolled in one of these schools. Students of color are six times more likely to attend a low performing school than their white peers. How do the schools in your area compare? Check using your zip code [here](#).

Here's a web site that, at first glance, might not look completely on point, but keep scrolling down. [Unnatural Equity](#) looks at health care disparities and their effect on many other life experiences, including schooling. There are links to the [Kids Count](#) data center (Annie E. Casey Foundation), the

[Center for Education Reform](#), and more.

The [Lumina Foundation](#) has a very specific goal: to increase the percentage of Americans with high-quality postsecondary degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025. It's worth it to surf the Lumina web site. Colleges and universities can play a significant role in narrowing the gap. You can find a compendium of concrete ideas in [Boosters, Brokers, and Bridges: Real-World Ideas for College Access Programs](#).

[The Institute for Higher Education Policy](#)'s mission is to increase access and success in postsecondary education through research that helps shape public policy and support economic and social development. IHEP hosts several programs, including [Pathways to College](#) and [BEAMS](#) (Building Engagement and Attainment for Minority Students). On the *Pathways to College* web site, you can find links to [state-by-state data](#), [college planning resources](#), and an [on-line library](#).

IHEP will be hosting a 2010 [Summer Academy](#), *Clearing College Pathways for Underserved Students*. The conference will include workshops in learning strategies, assessment, organizational change, and campus climate issues. Pull together a team from your campus and head out to Santa Ana Pueblo, N.M., July 19-23, 2010.

[Achieving the Dream](#) is dedicated to making the student success agenda a priority at community colleges and with state and national policymakers and stakeholders. The organization offers on-campus coaching, assistance with data collection, and networking opportunities. Check out their newsletter, *DataNotes* - the March-April 2010 issue contains the latest data on attendance and completion rates. On the home page, you can link to recent news, including articles in [Inside Higher Ed](#) and the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#).

[The Education Trust](#) works to close the achievement gap at all levels, pre-k through college. The Ed Trust emphasized high standards, strong teachers, fair funding, P-16 alignment, student access to financial aid, and state policy changes. This year's Education Trust [National Conference](#), *Taking Charge of Change: Effective Practices to Close Gaps and Raise Achievement*, will be Nov. 4-6 in Arlington, VA.

Between 2007 and 2009, over 3000 people around the country participated in National Issues Forums on the achievement gap. The findings from those dialogues have been recently released in [Helping Students Succeed: Communities Confront the Achievement Gap](#). NIF publishes a number of issue books on education, including [Too Many Children Left Behind: How Can We Close the Achievement Gap?](#)

[Public Agenda](#) studies and issues reports on what Americans think about public issues. Earlier this month, the federal government passed the Education Reconciliation Act, removing banks as the middle-man for student loans and financial aid and increasing the amount of money available for Pell grants. There's more to be done, according to Public Agenda's recent [With their Whole Lives Ahead of Them](#). According to survey respondents, most leave college because they need to work for financial reasons and can't manage the stress of balancing school, work, and family. Lowering the achievement gap, is of course a matter of money, but it colleges and universities need to revisit their structures, schedules, requirements, and student support services to address the needs of working students with family responsibilities.

As most of you know, there's a national call for controlling the cost of college. At the March [Policy Breakfast](#) (part of a year-long series sponsored by the [Maxwell School](#) at Syracuse University and Public Agenda), American Council on Education president Molly Corbett Broad talked about how higher education can control costs, how our education systems compare with those in other parts of the world, national standards, student loan legislation, and obstacles to college completion. These challenges call for "radical ideas." Watch the video of her talk [here](#).

The Center for Public Deliberation at the University of Houston Downtown hosted concurrent, small-group community dialogues - a study circles approach of multiple two-hour sessions held over several weeks - on [Achieving the Dream Dialogue-to-Action Initiative: Creating More College](#)

[Student Success](#). The project was designed to build the capacity of students, faculty, staff, and Houston citizens to engage in college reform at the University of Houston - Downtown, building justice-oriented models for academic and other types of support for college students, and to establish a network of activists who will advocate for supportive educational policies and practices. The web site contains links to a slide show on the initiative, [the discussion guide](#), the [final report](#), and activities of "[implementation teams](#)."

If you would like to share with us other resources for public dialogue and action on the educational achievement gap, we'll make them available to everyone! Send them to [Amy Cunningham](#).

New DDC-Kellogg Foundation Report on Active Civic Engagement

A new report from DDC and the Kellogg Foundation, *Creating Spaces for Change: Working Toward a "Story of Now" in Civic Engagement*, describes the changing relationship between community organizing and deliberative democracy. It draws heavily on the views and experiences of the people who participated in WKKF's *Civic Engagement Learning Year* and the [No Better Time conference](#). The report captures the spirit and substance of the discussions that occurred at those meetings, explains some of the tensions and opportunities facing this emerging field, and provides recommendations for funders, civic leaders, and civic educators. It highlights the shared interest of both community organizers and deliberative democrats in going beyond mobilization techniques to more structural changes in the ways that communities make decisions and solve problems. The report can be downloaded on the [DDC Resources page](#).

Building Civil Communities for Change, Atlanta, May 12-13

This year's theme for the annual *Leadership and Women of Color* conference at Spelman College is the importance of civility in strengthening America, one community, workplace, or person at a time. The conference will examine:

- The importance of women in building and sustaining civil societies
- The influence of civility on public discourse and behaviors of individuals and groups
- The role of media in promoting and fostering civility
- How to leverage civility to strengthen and elevate the workplace
- Case studies demonstrating the power of civility in leadership

To learn more about the conference and register, click [here](#).

Bridging Cultures grant opportunity: June 1 deadline

As part of its [Bridging Cultures initiative](#), the National Endowment for the Humanities is accepting proposals for programs that for both an academic forum and a workshop on one of two humanities themes: "Civility and Democracy" or "The Muslim World and the Humanities." Grants will be used to support projects that engage humanities scholars, public audiences, the state humanities councils, and other educators in the cultural bridging themes.

Sorry about the late notice, but this was only announced April 1, and we didn't hear about it immediately. The deadline is fast-approaching - June 1. *TDI is planning to submit a proposal*. To learn more about what we're going to do, contact [Nancy Thomas](#).

Call for Submissions for Special Themed Issue for Equity & Excellence in Education

Publication: *Intergroup Dialogue, Engaging Difference, Social Identities, and Social Justice*

Guest Editors: Ximena Zúñiga, Gretchen Lopez, and Kristie Ford

Complete manuscripts are due November 1, 2010. For submission guidelines, please visit the [journal website](#) and go to Instructions for Authors.

Questions? Contact [Ximena Zúñiga](#)

The Center for Dialogue Summer 2010 Courses

The [Center for Dialogue](#) at the [SIT Graduate Institute](#) teaches dialogic processes that lead to a more inclusive, just, and peaceful world. Here are two to consider:

Skills and Topics in Conflict Transformation: Facilitating Structured Dialogue for Youth

August 11-13, 2010

This course addresses why and how structured dialogue is used in youth peacebuilding and leadership programs to deepen communication and raise awareness of self, others, and social issues. Course participants are trained to design and facilitate effective youth dialogue, focusing on topics for teenagers from different cultures.

The Way of Council

August 13-15, 2010

This course introduces participants to the basic intentions and practices of Council - a dynamic circle process that encourages community building, conflict exploration and resolution, the sharing of personal and cultural stories, and collective and non-hierarchical decision-making in a supportive and compassionate environment.

For more information about SIT Graduate Institute degree programs, including these and other short courses, call 802-258-3510 or 800-336-1616 (toll-free in US) or email [admissions](#).