

# POLICY BRIEF

## *Bridge to Adulthood for Idaho Youth: Learning and Earning*



### Idaho KIDS COUNT



- *Idaho's young adults are more likely to be married than their peers nationally, and also more likely to be raising children.*
- *Idaho's overall graduation rate is strong in high school, but dropout rates remain high for Hispanic and Native American students, youth in foster care, those in juvenile detention, and teen parents.*
- *Idaho's students enroll in college at lower rates than their peers nationally, and are also less likely to complete a four year degree.*
- *Idaho offers higher education programs that are among the most affordable in the nation, yet Idaho's young adults are less likely to take advantage of the opportunity.*

The Idaho Kids Count series, *Bridge to Adulthood for Idaho Youth* examines today's reality for young adults, comparing Idaho young people to their peers around the nation. The first in the series, *Going Solo*, explored recent changes in the transition to adulthood in the United States as young people prepare themselves for adult roles ahead. Between 1960 and 2000, the percentage of American adults ages 20-30 enrolled in school more than doubled, while the age of marriage and childbearing was pushed back. Financial independence was delayed as well, with nearly two-thirds of those in their early 20's receiving economic support from parents, and 40 percent still getting help from home in their late 20's.

*Newsweek* journalist Peg Tyre (2002) laments the dependency of today's young adults:

These overgrown kids seem content to enjoy the protection of their parents as they drift from adolescence to early adulthood. Relying on your folks to light the shadowy path to the future has become so accepted that even the ultimate loser move – returning home to live with your parents – has lost its stigma.

Ms. Tyre may prefer the short path to independence common in Idaho, where more young people move directly from high school into the working world rather than continuing their education. Idaho's 18-24 year-olds are also more likely to be living independently of parents and relatives than their peers nationally, and more likely to be married and raising children.

However, Idaho young adults show the downside of early independence as well, with 26.7 percent living in poverty in 2003 compared to 21 percent for the U.S. Poverty was even greater for this group in 2002 at 29 percent - the highest rate in the nation. With so many of Idaho's young people raising children, poverty for young adults means that children start their lives in poverty as well.

The Partners for Prosperity project in eastern Idaho invited area high school seniors in spring 2005 to share their views on young adult poverty in the state as they approached their own independence.

Comments in these essays provide an insider’s view of the challenges of independence, as well as the struggles for young people who are unprepared for life on their own (Higley, 2005). In the words of one Idaho teen:

Day after day I hear my friends complain about not having enough money, yet they constantly talk about moving out on their own and taking the huge leap into independence. I often wonder if they stop to consider the numerous financial obligations they will be faced with. I have witnessed first hand friends and peers who are living on their own, and I know that it is not easy. Poverty-like conditions are not uncommon, such as an empty fridge or gas tank.

According to one Idaho student, “Teenagers know that they want money, but they do not know the best way to get it.” Another student writes, “Picture this: you’re between 18 and 24 and eager to be on your own, but when you get out there, you don’t know the first thing about surviving on your own.”

As one Idaho teen observes, “When you get out of high school it doesn’t mean that you are out of school; it’s just taking a higher step. Young adults don’t realize that!” In the current job market, access to living wage work requires training past high school — in community college, technical school, or a four year college program. Other youth get job training in the military or through work-place apprenticeships. One Idaho student concludes, “A thorough education is the best ammunition to fight poverty.”

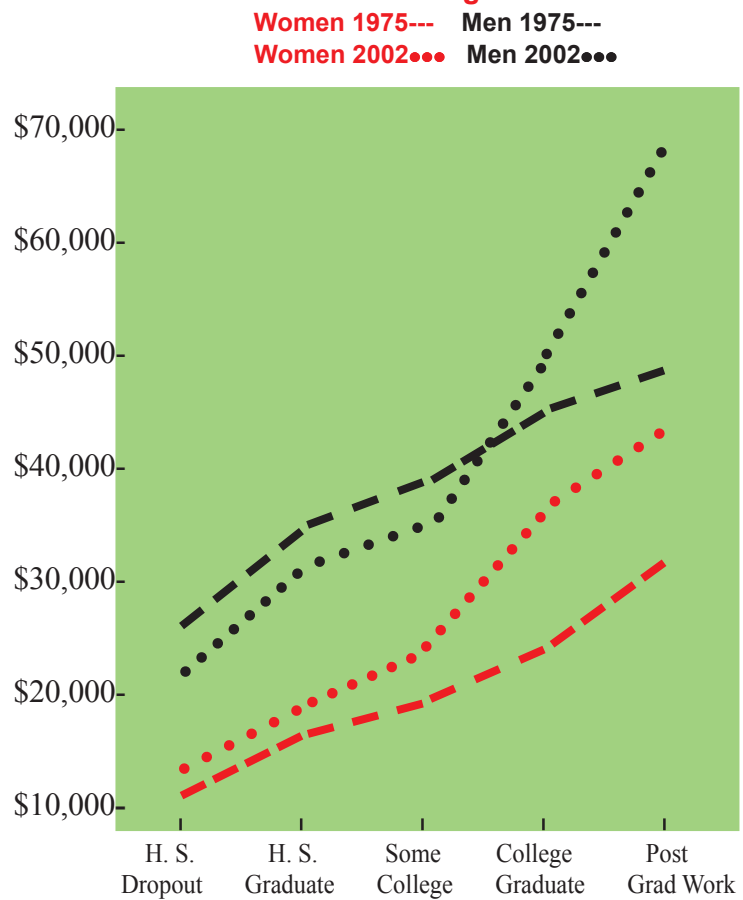
The present publication in the *Bridge to Adulthood* series explores the link between educational trends for young adults and their present and future earning power, that is, *Learning and Earning*. The analysis will link Idaho trends to those at the national level, considering the implications for young people, their families and communities, and for the state as a whole.

## LEARNING AND EARNING

Education establishes the foundation for a secure financial future. However, the level of education required for living-wage work has changed considerably in recent decades. Forty or fifty years ago a high school diploma gave a young adult a solid foothold in the working world. Thriving manufacturing and natural resource sectors of the economy offered jobs with wages that could support a family. Workplace apprenticeships and military training programs allowed many workers to build work skills as they earned a living. Even high school dropouts could manage if they were dependable and learned on the job.

However, education and income are tied more closely in the present economy than was true in years past. These changes over time are shown below in Figure 1, comparing annual incomes in inflation-adjusted dollars for U.S workers 25-34 years of age in 1975 and in 2002.

**Figure 1: Earnings by Education for U.S. Workers Ages 25-34**



All earnings have been adjusted for inflation. Source: Network on Transitions to Adulthood, 2004

In 1975 the best educated workers made about \$20,000 more than high school dropouts for both men and women. However, by 2002, the same education difference conferred a substantially greater income benefit of \$31,000 for women and \$44,400 for men.

These data suggest that higher education has never been a better investment for young adults. In the words of one teen essayist, “Education seems to be the key to ending the poverty struggle in Idaho, and I for one am ready to be a statistic now and avoid poverty later in life.” Another Idaho youth agrees, “In today’s society, going to college is a must.”

Figure 1 shows that the years have been especially hard on less-educated young male workers, who actually lost earning power over the years — ranging from a 16 percent decline for high school dropouts to a 9 percent drop for men with some college. Young males with a college diploma gained 11 percent in income, and those with post-graduate work increased their earning power by 25 percent between 1975 and 2002. Earnings of females increased about 20 percent between 1975 and 2002 for those without a college degree, but showed much stronger gains for those with a college degree (48 percent) or post-graduate work (42 percent). However, even these gains didn’t bring women parity in salary with men of comparable education.

**Table 1: Highest Degree Attained: 25-34 year-olds**

	U.S.	Idaho
<b>High School Dropout</b>	13.6%	11.5%
<b>HS Diploma/GED</b>	26.9%	27.6%
<b>Some College</b>	21.9%	26.5%
<b>AA Degree</b>	7.8%	10.8%
<b>Bachelor’s Degree</b>	21.6%	18.6%
<b>Grad/Prof degree</b>	8.2%	4.9%

*Source: American Community Survey 2003*

Given the strong link between education and earning power, where do Idaho’s young adults fit in educational attainment? Table 1 shows the educational levels of Idaho’s 25-34 year olds, a point in life when most have completed their educations (only three percent of Idahoans are in school at this point). Idaho is lower than the nation in high school dropouts, a positive step for young workers. However, rates of college graduates are 16 percent higher in the nation than in Idaho. The contrast is even greater for graduate and professional degrees — with national rates 67 percent higher than those for Idaho. Comparing these patterns with the earnings data shown in Figure 1, higher education attainment in Idaho drops off at college graduation — just the point when incomes have shown the biggest gains over the past quarter century. One Idaho youth essayist concludes, “Idaho’s poverty rate for young adults .... is a reflection of poor education.”

The records show that Idaho young people are somewhat more likely than their peers nationally to complete their education with an AA degree, the terminal degree at a community college. Idaho’s young adults also more frequently take some college work without completing a degree (21.9 percent vs. 26.5 percent), a level of achievement with only a modest income advantage over high school graduation. One Idaho teen essayist sympathizes, “Low-income college students who have no outside support, struggle through college and deal with years of debt from loans and other forms of payment. During their experience, they live way below the poverty line and some drop out of college because the struggle was too tough to deal with.” Such students often leave school with educational loans, but lack the college diploma that can bring enough income to repay their student debt.

## **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**

Expanding access to high school was America’s educational achievement of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1900, only six percent of the nation’s youth graduated from high school, but nearly 60 percent did so in the mid-fifties. By the century’s end, almost 90 percent of the nation’s youth earned a high school credential (Shaklee, 2000). This major shift over the century is a testament to the power of schools, communities, and families working together toward a common goal for youth.

Current high school graduation rates may be impressive compared to times past, but they need to be even higher. Relatively few of today's young adults lack a high school diploma but Figure 1 shows that there is no place for dropouts in today's economy. In 2003, less than 60 percent of high school dropouts in their early twenties were employed (Educational Testing Service, 2005).

In Idaho, 89 percent of 18-24 years olds had a high school credential in 2003, including 80 percent with a high school diploma and 9 percent with a GED (Measuring Up, 2004). However, state or national averages in graduation rates can obscure the limited attainment of subgroups within the population.

Idaho's two largest minority groups are Hispanics and Native Americans, each with educational records of concern. The Idaho State Department of Education doesn't track overall graduation rates for subgroups in the student population, but senior year statistics for 2003-2004 begin to tell the story. That is, 79 percent of Native American and 78 percent of Hispanic students who entered their senior year successfully graduated from high school. The comparable graduation rate for white students was 90 percent (Berg, 2005). However, many students drop out of school before their senior year — e.g. 58 percent of Hispanic high school dropouts leave school by their sophomore year. Young workers with such a limited education are especially underprepared for employment (Hispanic Profile Data Book, 2004).

Youth in foster care also have limited educational attainment. National data show that 37-46 percent of youth leave foster care before they have finished high school. (Foster and Gifford, 2004). A recent study of foster youth found better educational outcomes for those who remained in the foster care system past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. At 19 years of age, those still in foster care were twice as likely to be working toward their high school diploma or GED as those who had left the system. Foster youth with a high school credential were three times as likely to be enrolled in a two or four year college program if they were still in foster care. Federal funds provided by the Independent Living Program help older foster youth with educational expenses as they move into the adult years. Evidence from this study shows these funds to be a good investment for young people and for the nation (Courtney et al., 2005).

Youth in juvenile detention also have a poor record of high school completion. A longitudinal study of incarcerated 9<sup>th</sup> graders found that almost half failed to return to school upon release. Of those who did return to school, more than two-thirds dropped out within one year, and only fifteen percent had completed high school four years later (Kids Count Data Book, 2004).

Teen parenthood also undercuts educational attainment, especially for young mothers. Even controlling for other related factors (e.g. poverty), having a child before age 20 reduces academic attainment by almost three years. National data show that only about one-third of teen mothers and less than half of teen fathers go on to complete high school. (Kids Count Data Book, 2004).

This analysis shows several pockets of poor educational attainment for Idaho youth. Young people so poorly prepared for the working world will face chronic poverty and unemployment, with costs to themselves, to their communities, and to the state. Programs designed to address the unique challenges for youth within these groups will be important to Idaho's future.

## **ON TO COLLEGE**

College success depends on the foundations students have laid in high school and junior high. Idaho's current high school graduation requirements don't include much of the preparation required for college. High school courses required by many colleges include foreign language, world history, and higher-level math and science--none of which are required for graduation in Idaho. The top section of Table 2 (next page) compares college preparation of Idaho students with those in three other western states and with the U.S. as a whole. Idaho lags behind the U.S. and our neighbor states in student enrollment in upper level math and science, factors which increase success in higher education and save students from taking remedial courses once on campus.

**Table 2: Higher Education: U.S. and Four Western States**

	ID	UT	WA	WY	US
<b>Preparation</b>					
9-12 <sup>th</sup> graders with upper level math	40%	57%	—	51%	48%
9-12 <sup>th</sup> graders with upper level science	18%	36%	—	25%	31%
Number of scores 3+ on AP tests per 1000 juniors and seniors*	74	189	101	49	138
<b>Participation</b>					
18-24 year olds enrolled in college**	29%	35%	35%	31%	34%
Freshmen returning for 2 <sup>nd</sup> year:					
4 year institutions	65%	72%	83%	78%	74%
First time/full time students completing undergraduate degree in 6 years or less	43%	50%	63%	54%	54%
<b>Affordability</b>					
Percentage of average family income needed to attend***					
Community college	18%	17%	27%	21%	22%
Public 4 year college/university	22%	18%	31%	24%	28%
Private 4 year college/university	29%	21%	67%	—	68%
Average annual loan for undergrads	\$3044	\$3019	\$3619	\$2898	\$3344
*A score of 3 or more is required on the AP test to get college credit for Advanced Placement courses					
** Full and part time students currently enrolled in post high school education and training programs					
*** Includes full time tuition, room, and board minus financial aid					
Source: Measuring Up (2004)					

Advance Placement classes in high school offer students the challenge of college-level coursework and the chance to earn college credit by attaining a score of 3 or better on national standardized tests. Such courses help students to realize their own potential for success in college. Table 2 also shows that Idaho lags considerably behind the nation as a whole in AP credit earned in high school, and behind Utah and Washington as well.

Data in Table 2 also shows poor levels of college participation for Idaho's young adults. Idaho's 18-24 year olds are less likely than their peers nationally to be enrolled in college (Idaho is 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in college enrollment for this age group). Freshmen who enroll in college are also less likely to return for their sophomore year (Idaho ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation). Finally, only 43% of Idaho students complete their undergraduate degree in six years or less (Idaho ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for this measure of college completion).

The final section of Table 2 shows that Idaho compares very well in college affordability at both public and private colleges. This index takes into consideration levels of college tuition in the state, as well as family incomes and student aid availability. Idaho is third in the nation in affordability of four year public colleges and universities and second in the nation for affordability of private schools. Idaho young people leave school with a debt load slightly below that of their peers nationally. These statistics are from the 2003-2004 school year. Tuition increases at Idaho public universities in the past two years have likely decreased affordability somewhat from these levels, a trend evident across the nation. Tuition at U.S. public universities increased seven percent in the fall of 2005, following successive rate hikes of 10% and 13% in 2003 and 2004 (College Board, 2005).

This table tells a powerful story of opportunity lost: Idaho offers higher education programs that are among the most affordable in the nation, yet Idaho's young adults are less likely to take advantage of the opportunity.

Fewer Idaho young adults enroll in college or university, they return at lower rates after their freshman year of school, and fewer students finish their degrees in a timely manner.

Interpretation of data in Idaho on continuity in college completion requires consideration of the common pattern among Mormon young men in the state, who serve a mission with the church when they turn 19 years of age (women are eligible at 21 years of age). Many of these young people enroll for one year of school before their mission, a trend that may inflate Idaho's data on the failure to return to school. However, many of these young men will return from their missions to successfully complete a degree. Perhaps the story of college completion in Idaho is better told in Table 1 featuring the 25-34 year age period, when these young people would have returned from their missions and had a chance to complete their school work. However, Idaho is higher in the number of young adults who take some college work without completing a degree.

Weak preparation of students graduating from high school could be an important factor in both college enrollment and retention. The limited coursework in advanced-level science and math shown in Table 2 may leave more students without the prerequisites for college entrance. Those who go to school may struggle more to succeed in the competitive educational environment of a college or university, leading to a higher dropout rate after the freshman year.

Idaho's higher education patterns raise concerns, but trends in the past decade are encouraging. That is, only 22 percent of Idaho's 18-24 year olds were enrolled in college 10 years ago, compared to 29 percent in 2003; only 33 percent of students 10 years ago completed their degrees in six years or less, compared to 43 percent in 2003. Idaho's pass rates for the AP test have also more than doubled in the past 10 years (Measuring Up, 2004). These gains need to be maintained and improved so that Idaho's young adults close the gap with their peers nationally.

Idaho's educational expenses may compare well with other states, but affordability of higher education depends on a student's family resources. That is, Idaho's low tuition and fees may be a remarkable bargain to middle- and upper-income families, but still beyond consideration for those at lower income levels. Ensuring college access to all may require a strong program of need-based aid for the lowest income students. Though most need-based student aid is offered at the federal level, many states have significant student aid programs of their own. Need-based aid in state programs averages 40 percent of the amount offered by the federal government, while state aid in Idaho represents only three percent of the funds federal programs offer Idaho students based on need (Measuring Up, 2004).

Concerns about college costs were on the minds of several Idaho high school essayists. As one student wrote, "The price of college tuition and the other costs that accompany it, such as a computer, books, or other supplies, looms over my head." Another essayist says, "I look at the cost of tuition, books, and living costs that come with attaining a higher education through a university and it worries me. While I hope that the combined assistance of grants and scholarships will be enough to move me through college, I must realize that in all actuality, I will inevitably go into debt." Another student notes the temptation of credit cards when expenses mount, "The credit card companies aim their products directly at college students wishing to take care of their own money issues rather than ask a parent. Once a student is tricked into carrying a card, it is a tough job to stay above the plentiful bills and have money to eat at the same time." The data shows the merit in these student concerns. College costs have risen by more than 50 percent in inflation adjusted terms since 1990 and student loans have increased in parallel, also up 60 percent from 1990. Half of today's student aid is in loans rather than grants, compared to aid packages in the 70's when only one-fifth of the aid was a loan to be repaid (Boushey, 2005).

Consider the joint effects of these trends for today's students. Students in 1981 working at minimum wage would earn about two-thirds of their college costs for the year through full-time summer employment alone. In contrast, today's minimum wage worker would need to work full time all year long to fund a single year of education at a four-year public college or university (Boushey, 2005). Increasing educational expenses, combined with the declining earning power of entry level work, put today's college students in a financial squeeze.

## FAMILY TIES

Data shows that growing enrollment in higher education at the national level is accompanied by delays in family commitments. Young people are marrying and having children later in life as they build a financial foundation.

Patterns of family formation for Idaho young adults contrast sharply with those at the national level. Table 3 shows that Idaho men are more than twice as likely to be married in the 18-19 and 20-24 year age spans, and 30 percent more likely to be married than their peers nationally at 25-29 years of age (Table 3 includes all who have ever been married). Idaho women also marry at much higher rates than their age mates nationally at all three age levels. More women than men married at each age.

**Table 3: Married Young Adults**

	Ages	18-19	20-24	25-29
<b>Males</b>	<b>Idaho</b>	5.3%	34.8%	62.8%
	<b>U.S.</b>	2.3%	16.7%	48.2%
<b>Females</b>	<b>Idaho</b>	10.1%	42.2%	75.2%
	<b>U.S.</b>	6.4%	27.5%	59.1%

*Source: American Community Survey 2003*

These trends toward early marriage in Idaho may indicate a social climate that encourages early partnering for young people. Once they are married and on their own, young adults face financial responsibilities that will be hard to manage without the foundation of higher education or significant job training. Yet when early family formation is on one's life agenda, higher education may get pushed aside, undercutting future earning power.

In the words of one student essayist, "In Idaho it is socially acceptable to get married before careers and financial security are established. Careers and financial security cannot be established without college." A second student writes, "Young adults are too excited about getting into a relationship. They do not realize the financial responsibility that comes with getting married. Many young adults are trying to pay for college and a spouse at the same time."

Idaho young people are also more likely to be raising children than their peers nationally: among 18-24 year olds, Idaho men were 44 percent more likely to be fathers raising children at home, and women 26 percent more likely to be involved in childrearing. Young adults with family responsibilities often find that time and money are too limited for higher education and other job training. As noted by one Idaho high school student:

Many couples get married at a much younger age in Idaho, and begin a family very early. However, these same people that are raising families are only qualified to get lower paying jobs because they lack the necessary education for many higher paying jobs. Consequently, as the number of people in the family is increasing, the amount of income flowing into the household is not.

Couples seeking early marriage and parenthood may identify with Idaho's rural tradition. One student explains:

The old fashioned mentality appearing from Idaho's agricultural base is very apparent in the morals and values of the state. Many young people choose to marry and start families in their late teens and early twenties. Oftentimes one parent chooses to stay home with the children while the other parent works. The poverty level rises with each additional family member, but the number of wage earners remains the same. This results in a Catch-22, and also contributes to the percentage of young people living under the poverty level.

Evidence supports this rural interpretation, with 24-26 year-olds in non-metro areas considerably more likely than their metropolitan peers to be married (46 versus 32 percent) and raising children (42 versus 26 percent). The gap in higher education between the two groups is sizeable too, with metro young people much more likely to hold a college degree (32 versus 18 percent). Incomes for young adults in metropolitan areas average \$22,000, which is 21 percent higher than the \$18,200 for age mates in non-metro areas (Brown, Moore, & Bzostek, 2003).

As students pursue higher education, their links to Mom and Dad may continue to be strong. Many young people fund their educations with help from their parents, in tuition payments, support for books and computers, rent and living expenses. Evidence at the national level shows that parents provide an average of \$38,000 in assistance to their children between 18 and 34 years of age. Since 1970 there has also been a 50 percent increase in those in their 20's living at home with Mom and Dad. With college expenses growing at a steady pace over recent years, financial support from parents is increasingly important as students manage the economics of higher education (Schoeni and Ross, 2004).

Of course, some families have few financial resources to share with their young adult offspring. In many families, adult children are expected to help parents financially, rather than vice versa. Students without help from home may find college to be financially out of reach. Others may meet their school expenses with student loans. In 2000, 70 percent of students from families with incomes less than \$30,000 graduated with college debt, while only 44 percent of students from families with more than \$100,000 in income left school with debt to repay (American Council on Education, 2001). The sizeable college debt common today may seem prohibitive to low income families accustomed to managing with limited financial resources.

## **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR IDAHO YOUTH**

The present analysis suggests that current economic reality has fueled changes in the process of attaining independence for young adults. Those in Idaho take a shorter route to independence than their peers nationally, but endure the negative economic consequences of entering the working world with less educational preparation. Workers in today's knowledge-based economy will prosper only if they have the knowledge the market needs. The present analysis suggests several ways to better position Idaho youth to meet the challenges of the current working world.

**High school graduation:** Idaho's overall graduation rate is high, but groups with poor graduation records include Hispanic and Native American students, youth in foster care, those in juvenile detention, and teen parents. Outreach to groups at risk should begin in the years before school starts, with quality child care programs, proven early education programs such as Head Start, and parent involvement programs such as Parents as Teachers. High quality programs for out of school care and for continued parent involvement also increase student academic success in the K-12 years.

A recent study of youth aging out of foster care in Washington and Oregon shows how research can be used to improve outcomes for marginalized youth. The foster care alumni in the study showed challenges as young adults in areas of mental health, education and employment. However, further analysis pointed to program factors that optimized outcomes for these youth, such as continuity in foster care placement, and financial resources for those exiting the system. These findings can guide foster care programs as they identify core conditions that can improve outcomes for foster youth as they move into adulthood (Casey Family Programs, 2005). Relevant research is available for the other groups of concern in Idaho; such research can guide program development to increase success for these youth as well.

**College pipeline:** Idaho's students enroll in college at lower rates than their peers nationally, and are also less likely to complete a four year degree. Idaho students lag behind their peers in higher level math and science courses taken in high school, and in the number of students who earn advanced placement credit in high school courses. In fall 2005, the Idaho State Board of Education proposed extensive changes in high school graduation requirements to address some of these issues (Idaho State Board of Education, 2005). Public debate about these proposals can help the state determine how to meet the needs of the diversity of students in high school while at the same time providing a strong educational foundation for more young people to pursue higher education. High school changes designed to increase success of students in higher education should also fit the needs of those students who are not college bound. If increased learning in high school is required for students to be prepared for today's working world, schools may need to lengthen the school day and/or extend the school year to accommodate the additional requirements for students.

Studies show that parental expectations are important to their children's higher education attainment (Osgood et al., 2004). Parents who did not go to college are especially disadvantaged in supporting their children's college search and application processes. Those without college experience may also be intimidated by the price of higher education. Programs designed to encourage college aspirations for youth will need to involve their parents as well. High school counseling and college recruitment practices need to take into account the special concerns of "first generation" college students.

Idaho has a remarkably affordable system of higher education, yet it is still out of range for many low income students. Promoting access of these students to Idaho's colleges and universities will require a more extensive state need-based system of student aid along with a strong outreach program so students understand what financial help is available to them.

A strong system of community colleges can expand access to affordable higher education while bringing education closer to home for many students. Students can get their first two years of education at lower tuition levels and at less expense to the state. However, a word of caution is in order. That is, the increment in income from the two-year AA degree is modest in comparison to that from a 4-year college degree. In today's knowledge-based economy, an AA degree is becoming less a terminal degree and more an affordable stepping stone to a four-year degree.

The higher education plan for the state needs to offer training in job skills for those who are not going to a four-year college program. Skill training in fields such as health and technology can provide Idaho young adults a solid foundation for living-wage work and employment stability. Students headed to vocational or technical education may be well served by an expanded network of community colleges. Training programs that fit well with the regional economy can grow a trained workforce for employers while providing young adults access to careers that offer a living wage and stable employment.

**Family commitments:** Idaho's young adults are more likely to be married than their peers nationally, and also more likely to be raising children. Such family ties can limit students' ability to attend college full time as they juggle home, work, and school responsibilities. Student aid tends to be structured for students attending school full time, but young marrieds and parents will be better served by financial aid programs for part-time students. Quality child care that fits within a student budget will also help bring a college education within reach of young parents.

Married students may be less mobile than single students as they accommodate the needs of their spouse and children. Other students are tied by obligations at home, such as caring for aging grandparents or for younger siblings. Place-bound students need education that is local, perhaps through a community college system.

This analysis shows twin educational goals for Idaho, i.e. high school graduation needs to be a nearly universal achievement for Idaho young adults, and more of those grads should go on to complete a higher education program. Education policies for Idaho's youth that address both goals will improve Idaho's economic future.

Greater educational attainment for Idaho's young adults will require coordinated action by students, families, communities, and state and federal government. A similar joint effort in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century made high school graduation a reality for the great majority of our youth. The challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be to extend the opportunity for success in high school to all students, and to involve more Idaho young adults in the university and/or vocational and technical training required for our future workforce.

The final issue of the **Bridge to Adulthood** series will look at how Idaho's young adults move into the world of work. The skills and abilities of Idaho's young adult workforce will be considered in the context of the jobs available and skills required. In addition, we will look at the community, business and state supports required by young working families, such as child care and health insurance.

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