

***WELFARE REFORM AND THE COLLEGE OPTION:
A NATIONAL CONFERENCE***

A Summary of Conference Proceedings

September 25-25, 1999
Gallaudet University
Washington, D.C.

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**The Howard Samuels State Management & Policy Center,
The City University of New York Graduate School and University Center
of The City University of New York**

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Co-Sponsored by the Howard Samuels State Management & Policy Center, City University of New York Graduate School, McAuley Institute, Wider Opportunities for Women, and Center for Women Policy Studies

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WELFARE REFORM AND THE COLLEGE OPTION: A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

PROGRAM

Friday Afternoon, September 24

Opening Plenary

Afternoon Workshops:

- Model College and University Programs for Low Income Women
- Organizing and Advocacy for College opportunities for Women Receiving TANF Assistance
- State and County Welfare Agencies: Creative Approaches to Encourage College
- Building the Case for College: Existing Research and Gathering New Data
- A College Educated Workforce: Strategies and Model Programs for Employers
- Working Within and Outside TANF: Model State Programs and Legislation

Saturday Morning, September 25

Morning Plenary

Morning Workshops:

- Model College and University Programs for Low Income Women
- Organizing and Advocacy for College opportunities for Women Receiving TANF Assistance
- Community-Based Organizations: Creative Approaches to Encourage College
- Building the Case for College: Existing Research and Gathering New Data
- A College Educated Workforce: : Strategies and Model Programs for Employers
- Working Within and Outside TANF: Model State Programs and Legislation

Saturday Afternoon, September 25

Roundtables

- Brainstorming Solutions on College Campuses
- Advocacy and Organizing: Building a Coalition and Making the Case
- Research Needs and Opportunities for Research Collaboration
- Brainstorming Solutions for the Business Sector
- Working Creatively Within Your State's TANF Program
- What is the Next Step at the National Level?

Closing Plenary: Recommendations for Action

ABOUT THE CO-SPONSORS:

The **Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center of the City University of New York Graduate School** is a nationally recognized policy research institute, conducting research on comparative state and local issues in the areas of education, welfare, community development, gender, and race.

The **McAuley Institute** is a national, faith-based housing organization with an intentional focus on meeting the economic and housing needs of low income women and their families.

Wider Opportunities for Women is a 33-year old national nonprofit organization that works locally and nationally to achieve economic independence for low income women and girls. WOW leads a network of over 500 community-based organizations, community colleges, and welfare and workforce development agencies that annually serve over one million women and girls.

The **Center for Women Policy Studies** is a national nonprofit, multiethnic, and multicultural feminist policy research and advocacy institution. The Center seeks to incorporate the perspectives of women, in all their diversity, into the formulation of public policy that ensures just and equitable treatment of women.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education is the means by which countless Americans have enhanced their social status and earning power, and bettered the life chances of their children. It is a primary way to ensure a thriving democracy that requires a participatory and discerning citizenry. During the twentieth century great strides have been made toward opening the doors to college. Access was significantly widened for white males after the second World War in the expansive GI Bill, and as a result of the Civil Rights and Women's movements, minorities and women markedly improved their access to college. Low income people, however, have not had equal opportunity to pursue higher education.

The 1988 Family Support Act, and the JOBS¹ program created through it, encouraged post-secondary education for welfare recipients under a higher education option. JOBS gave state authorities discretion to permit recipients two or four years of education, and forty seven states adopted provisions for at least two years of college. In a 1996 radio address to the nation, President Clinton said, "We have to make two years of education after high school as universal as a high school education is now."² The 1996 TANF legislation described as "welfare reform" constituted a step backward in opportunities for college for low income people. Under TANF the focus was on placing welfare recipients into low wage jobs and removing them from the welfare rolls as soon as possible. Welfare recipients faced work requirements and saw their opportunities to attend college severely curtailed. Colleges and universities reported a precipitous drop in the enrollment of welfare recipient students. For example, enrollment of welfare recipients at the City University of New York dropped from 27,000 in 1997 to around 10,000 in 1999. This trend is mirrored nationally: in 1995-96 there were more than 650,000 welfare recipients attending college; by 1999 the number had dropped to just over 358,000.

In order to examine the impact of welfare reform policy on the lives of women seeking to improve their lives through the pursuit of higher education, the Howard Samuels State Management & Policy Center co-sponsored a national conference, *Welfare Reform and the College Option*, on September 24 -25, 1999, in Washington, D.C. Other co-sponsors included the McAuley Institute,

¹ Job Opportunities and Basic Skills.

² August 17, 1996, Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), and the Center for Women Policy Studies. Over 260 attendees, including representatives from the academic community, service providers, politicians, and most importantly, welfare recipients themselves, convened to discuss ways to guarantee low income women the opportunity of obtaining a college degree.

The conference consensus was that higher education is a key means of enabling low income women and their families to get out of poverty and on the path to self-sufficiency. Research findings have consistently demonstrated that higher education increases the earning power of low income women; it enhances self-esteem, promotes participation in civic life, and helps make a mother a positive role-model for her children. Research conducted by the Howard Samuels Center has demonstrated that while an associate degree improves earning power, a bachelors degree leads to greater economic independence.³ In a study of welfare recipients in New York, the Howard Samuels Center research concluded that fully 100% of four year graduates were off welfare!⁴ These studies show that welfare recipients who earned a bachelor's degree *maintained employment and never needed welfare again*. Many of them even went on to pursue additional degrees. And although acquisition of a college degree is the best outcome, Cecilia Rouse has shown that even a few semesters of college can bring measurable financial benefits.⁵

According to the 1998 *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, employees with bachelor's degrees earned \$36,155— 55 percent more than high school graduates. Minorities in particular stand to gain from access to higher education. Of all groups, Black women enjoyed the largest increase in earnings as a result of additional schooling. Black women with only a high school education grossed \$356 per week in 1998, compared with \$605 for those who had a bachelor's degree.⁶ Higher education is an effective

³ Gittell, Marilyn, J. Gross & J. Holdaway. 1993. *Building Human Capital: The Impact of Post-Secondary Education on AFDC Recipients in Five States*. NY: The Howard Samuels State Management & Policy Center

⁴ Gittell, Marilyn, M. Schehl, & C. Fareri. 1990. *From Welfare to Independence: The College Option*. NY: The Howard Samuels State Management & Policy Center.

⁵ Rouse, Cecilia E. 1998. "Do Two Year Colleges Increase Overall Educational Attainment? Evidence from the States." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 17(4):595-620. Pp. 600, 615.

⁶ *Current Population Survey Annual Demographic Supplement*, March 1999.

antidote to poverty, and a college education is the linchpin of social mobility for low-income women.

The relationship between post secondary education and greater economic power is becoming more important than ever to social mobility in our increasingly information and technology-based economy. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data predict professional occupations to be the fastest growing group of jobs between now and 2008. The BLS has projected that employers requiring an associate degree or more education is expected to grow 31 percent, considerably faster than the 14 percent growth rate for all occupations during the same period. In addition, BLS analyses also demonstrate that each year of additional schooling decreases the chances of being unemployed. In 1998, unemployment among high school graduates was 4.1%, compared to 1.9% among bachelor degree holders.

Even in the face of this overwhelming evidence, the 1996 TANF legislation created new obstacles to attaining a post-secondary education for a segment of the population which had the most to gain from access. Initially, the federal legislation permitted a maximum of one year of vocational education for recipients. But coalitions of students, activists, advocates, researchers and policymakers in several states convinced state leaders to act in the interest of low income students. State governments responded to organized pressure and advocacy to expand the higher education option, and they in turn pressed for revision of the federal regulations. The final TANF regulations released in April 1999 assured that the federal government would not challenge states that provided a more liberal higher education option to its welfare recipients.

In states around the country, coalitions of students and advocates have organized in response to the restrictive TANF policies, seeking to restore the college option for low income people. It was in Maine that these groups saw their first success. Wyoming also adopted special post-secondary regulations. In California, student parents, advocates, and college faculty have been especially active. Welfare administered at the county level reflects differences in practices in response to grassroots organizing, lobbying and conferences. Some California county agencies now allow study time to count toward work requirements. Efforts are now being aimed at making this a statewide policy. Welfare organizations and advocates in Kentucky have been successful in winning two years of higher education; their Governor and other state leaders are now considering ways in which to extend the option.

Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, and Maryland have responded to various coalition's pressure to return the higher education option by implementing more favorable higher education legislation and regulations. However, two years of college remains the limit (three in Illinois), and because the changes are recent, it is uncertain whether recipients can take full advantage of the reforms. Activists and organizers are closely monitoring how the rules are being implemented.

The Welfare Reform and the College Option National Conference, which brought together people from over 22 states, was a forum for discussion among activists and advocates which helped to highlight and identify common problems, as well as to propose ways to overcome them. Conference participants shared a wide range of important experiences and concerns. Most prominent was their interest in coalition-building and local- and state-level organization. They explored the variety of college and community organization programs for low income women, state and county welfare programs that make college attendance easier, and shared strategies for working within and outside of the current TANF laws to provide access to higher education. The participants agreed on the need to convince college communities to embrace student parents and recognize their value as well as their needs. Some suggestions included recruiting welfare recipients through campus based coordinators, reaching out to potential employers to create internships for the students, and working with community based organizations who are often the first to contact potential students. All participants supported the idea of creating a network of activists, advocates, researchers and policymakers to effectively serve welfare recipients who are seeking easier access to post-secondary education and economic independence.

Conference participants have begun the necessary work which they identified at the conference as priorities for their campaign. A group of students on welfare who met at the conference have created an Internet club, The Student Parent Support Network, which enhances their capacity to communicate and organize. In addition, the Howard Samuels Center is currently working with a student-based grassroots organization to establish a nationwide network to promote the re-institution of a higher education option. There are also plans underway to produce a national newsletter and a video documentary of the conference proceedings and interviews with participants.

Researchers who attended the conference have also decided to form a network to work more closely with each other in their efforts to conduct new studies that will fill in gaps in the existing research.

They shared the view that there needed to be increased, and more sharply directed research to describe the different qualitative outcomes of college experience and to encourage more supportive public policies.

The following sections discuss the conference proceedings.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

The conference was organized around seven major topics, which were: 1) organizing and advocacy for college opportunities for women receiving TANF; 2) state and county welfare agencies: creative ways to encourage college; 3) building the case for college: existing research and gathering new data; 4); community-based organizations: creative ways to encourage college; 5) a college-educated workforce: strategies and model programs for employers; 6) model college and university programs for low income women; and 7) working within and outside TANF: model states and legislation.

In order to facilitate the highest level of participation from conference attendees, each workshop, which centered on one of the seven chosen topics, was followed by a roundtable session. The roundtables were designed to follow-up on workshop topics in a more intimate and problem-solving manner. Roundtable participants were urged to develop recommendations and next-step strategies. The closing plenary summarized the recommendations of the roundtables and put forward an agenda for future work.

This report on the conference proceedings is organized by workshop topics and outlines the central issues and themes that emerged out of panelist and audience discussions. Each section is prefaced by a listing of the speakers and facilitators and a description of the workshop topic.

OPENING PLENARY

Goals and Purposes of the Conference.

The opening plenary created an inspirational environment for participants to work in. Marilyn Gittell, Professor of Political Science at CUNY and Director of the Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, opened the conference. She situated the conference goals and purposes within a larger context. Professor Gittell noted that the JOBS legislation was a move forward

because it acknowledged that training and education is the best route to meaningful and worthwhile jobs. She asserted that JOBS was a progressive policy and that TANF has been a move backward, to times prior to the Family Support Act. “Our research makes us know that there is a better way,” she said. There are several ways for states to by-pass the federal regulations and to support the college option for low income people.

In the late 1970s Professor Gittell was asked by the New York State Department of Education to conduct one of the very first studies of students on AFDC. This pioneering research, as well as subsequent studies, proved conclusively that a four-year college degree was the key to permanently escaping poverty. In carrying out this research she also discovered that useful data on the population didn't exist. The welfare bureaucracy did not keep records of college-attending recipients and neither did colleges, or if they had it, they didn't share it because of confidentiality issues.

Students and advocates sometimes lack access to the information and networks that would help them to realize that there are others who share their interests and anxieties. Dr. Gittell summed up this issue by recounting what some conference attendees had told her: “I'm so happy you're having this conference. Here I was doing this work all alone in Ohio, Wisconsin, or Alabama...I didn't know all these people were doing the same things I was. I thought I was all alone.” “And this is the purpose of the conference,” Dr. Gittell said, “that we share the experiences and that we learn from each other...to know that there are people out there doing the same thing.”

Why Education and Training Matter

Anthony Carnevale, Vice President for Public Leadership at the Educational Testing Service, provided ammunition for those making the case for the higher education option. He began by pointing out that “The solution to the welfare transition to autonomy and independence lies in developing human capital and not necessarily work. Human capital development allows access to jobs that train and that can provide a family wage.”

The need for higher education has become increasingly central to attaining economic security. There are two recent trends that make this point very clear. First, low wage jobs in today's economy do not provide the career ladders that a worker could expect between the end of World War II and the 1960s. During that time it was possible to “get a job in the loading dock and make your way into the a

corner office and become one of the bosses,” stated Dr. Carnevale. Today’s low wage jobs do not offer training and learning opportunities, and thus provide no possibility of advancement or substantial pay raises. There is no way out of these jobs. Furthermore, Carnevale pointed out that those former welfare recipients who are now working are earning somewhere around \$13,000 per year. Even if they are fortunate enough to experience a two or three percent yearly wage increase, their income will only be \$19,000 after ten years of full-time work. Only human capital development can create the skills to take advantage of jobs that offer career mobility and income increases.

Second, inequality has increased in the midst of America’s longest economic boom. Much of this inequality is the result of an income gap between those people who enjoy the benefits of higher education and those who don’t. Carnevale drove this point home when he said, “to have a family income [today] in America, you need earners...that have two wages and at least high school plus two years of college...[otherwise] you don’t have...a wage that will buy you a house and a car and support a child.” Thus, one way of decreasing poverty is to make it easier for low income citizens to take advantage of training and higher education.

More public assistance recipients could gainfully benefit from higher education than is generally known. Anthony Carnevale’s research shows that 32% of TANF recipients could be prepared to take advantage of a community college education with 200 hours of training. This is equivalent to one semester of college. Another 27% of recipients already have the skills to take advantage of four years of college. Unfortunately, these students were probably the first to leave the welfare rolls and most likely are now in low wage jobs, not college (see Anthony Carnevale and Donna Desrochers, *Getting Down to Business: Matching Welfare Recipient’s Skills to Jobs that Train*, 1999, Educational Testing Service).

Linking Education and Social Welfare Policy

To consistently develop model programs to assist low income students, higher education and social welfare policy and institutions need to be more closely linked together. Diane Wartchow, Program Director of the Student Parent HELP Center at the General College of the University of Minnesota, counseled the audience to consider ways in which to encourage partnerships between educational and social service programs that together meet the needs of low income students. Because

the development of human capital requires longer-term resource investment, a convergence between higher education and social welfare policy should facilitate the endeavor.

The Role of TANF Recipients

The charge of advocating for the higher education option must fall squarely on the shoulders of the students themselves. Diana Spatz, a former welfare recipient who has faced the challenges of homelessness, domestic violence and depression, now has a bachelor's degree from the University of California-Berkeley. Along the way, with the help of a sensitive community college counselor, she learned that she deserved the chance to pursue her aspirations, and that a college education was the best vehicle for getting her there. She also learned that low income students had to come together to protect and promote their interests. To this end she spearheaded the creation of LIFETIME (Low Income Families Empowerment Through Education). LIFETIME, a grassroots organization that grew out of meetings in Diana Spatz's kitchen, is composed of Oakland area mothers who come from six different colleges in that area. The leadership of the Cal-WORKS (California's TANF program) recipients who sit on LIFETIME's board is critical to its mission, which is to "empower low income moms and dads to determine, pursue, and achieve their goals for education, employment, and economic security...."

WORKSHOPS

Organizing and Advocacy for College Opportunities for Women Receiving TANF Assistance

Workshop Description: The 1996 welfare reform legislation restricted the states's capacity to determine how much post-secondary education to allow qualified recipients. In recent years, local coalitions of recipients, poverty advocates, academics and others have formed in Maine, Wyoming, and elsewhere, to counter this policy. In this workshop, representatives of different coalitions and organizations discussed their experiences, covering such topics as how to organize students, overcoming barriers to organizing, and working with like-minded groups, including college administrators, state agencies, employers and state legislators.

Friday Workshop:

Facilitator: Deborah Gottschalk, Esq., Society for Legal Aid, Wilmington, DE

Panelists:

- * Rich Seckel, Kentucky Office of Legal Service Programs, Lexington, KY
- * Hannah Oakman, Personal Empowerment Now (PEN), Philadelphia, PA
- * Diana Spatz, LIFEtime, Berkeley, CA
- * Judy Ryan, University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME
- * Malikkah Phillips & Davina Anthony, Boston Outreach Workers, Dorchester, MA

Saturday Workshop:

Facilitator: Rick Blum, Esq., Legal Aid Society, New York, NY

Panelists:

- * Nina Dunning, Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition, Poulsbo, WA
- * Beatrice Lopez, Welfare Rights Initiative at the Center for Study of Family Policy, Hunter College, New York, NY
- * Nancy Goodman, Wellspring House, Inc., Gloucester, MA
- * Lory Griffy, Women in Transition, Louisville, KY
- * Martina Gillis, Coalition for Ethical Welfare Reform, San Francisco, CA

Obstacles to Organizing Students and Building Coalitions

Issues in Organizing. Most of the higher education-friendly changes that have occurred since welfare reform came about as a result of organizing, advocacy, and coalition-building. Collaboration between groups concerned with social justice, poverty eradication and women's empowerment gives a stronger public voice to the higher education option. Policymakers are more likely to take notice of organized groups.

However, organizing students and coalition-building around the higher education option is not easy. Students receiving public assistance often are unaware of their rights and case workers may not be familiar with the new laws. Too often case workers are obstructionists. A lack of data makes it difficult to convince policymakers of the severity of problems such as the large number of students who have dropped out of school because of welfare reform. Yet students and advocates alike are aware of the value of a college education and can utilize several strategies as a part of their organizing, coalition-building and consciousness-raising efforts.

Poverty and Lack of Support. Probably the greatest impediment to organizing students on welfare is poverty. The combination of poverty with parenting, work requirements, and the demands of college require so much time and energy that few students are able to seriously consider being advocates. Beatrice Lopez of the Welfare Rights Initiative explained that a major challenge to organizing welfare students is the simple fact that "poverty takes up their time." This is one reason why supportive services such as child care, transportation subsidies, and work on or near campus are essential to low

income women's timely completion of college.

Student Parent Rights as Welfare Recipients. Most students receiving public assistance are not aware of exactly what their rights are, and thus are unaware of what their alternatives are. This is especially true under the new laws, which many of the undertrained caseworkers themselves did not understand. Hannah Oakman of the Personal Empowerment Now (PEN) program pointed out that “These students didn’t realize that they would soon be faced with the prospect of choosing between the basics of food, clothing, and shelter and the completion of their degree requirements. What’s worse is that the significant changes in [the] distribution of benefits were unevenly applied and even harder to understand by case workers in the welfare district offices. This meant that college students who were on welfare faced cut off, sanctions and loss of benefits due to the lack [of] appropriate training for welfare benefit administrators. This meant that students HAD to know their rights.”

The issue of student parent rights is so important that advocates in Kentucky had these rights written into reform legislation. In her discussion of drafting House Bill 434 (Kentucky) and crafting a compromise that allowed it to pass, Lory Griffy of *Women in Transition* emphasized how the Jefferson County Welfare Reform Coalition and other groups were adamant that provisions requiring the state welfare agency to inform recipients of the higher education option and their rights remain a part of the legislation.

Caseworker Obstruction. Line personnel can prevent effective policy implementation. For example, case workers are sometimes obstructionists because they are bewildered by the array of new rules and responsibilities under welfare reform. They might not be aware of creative ways to allow recipients to pursue higher education, especially where they are told that work of any kind is the highest priority. Then there are case workers who allow personal opinion to hinder creatively addressing the higher education option. Nina Dunning, an organizer with the Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition (WROC), in apparent frustration, rhetorically asked the audience “...if anyone out there has any advice or suggestions on how to persuade someone [a case worker or policy maker] who says, ‘why should we support them [welfare recipients] to get degrees when I had to do it myself’ then please let me know.” There is no simple answer to Nina Dunning’s question and persuasive evidence that supports reasons for why qualified welfare recipients should get college degrees is not easy to find.

Lack of Data. The glaring lack of relevant data stymies many potentially effective organizational and advocacy efforts. Very few colleges and universities collect the kinds of information that allow identification of public assistance recipients. This makes it difficult to show how welfare reform negatively affects college enrollment or to identify the number of students on campus who could benefit from supportive services. Legislators are likely to want to see “figures” before they seriously consider the college option. Workshop panelists pointed out drastic enrollment declines: 25 percent between September 1997 and September 1998 at community colleges in Washington; more than 60 percent in the City University of New York system (around 18,000 students) since 1996, and 20 percent at Kentucky community colleges. Such figures are not available in most states nor from most post-secondary institutions. However, community colleges are more likely to keep track of their low income students than are four year institutions.

Strategies for Promoting the College Option

The Value of a College Education. A college education is the linchpin of economic self-sufficiency. But this strategy is ignored by welfare reform. Low income women understand the importance of higher education to social mobility. Martina Gillis, a former welfare recipient and coordinator for the Coalition for Ethical Welfare Reform aptly made this point. Before being forced to go on welfare, Gillis was working. She hit a “glass ceiling” and could advance no further in her job; nor did her job provide adequate benefits. Low income women who are directed into low paying jobs with no access to higher education are likely to face similar problems. As Gillis said, “... one needs a degree for a better job.” Gillis was also inspired to return to school because of her mother’s educational success. Beatrice Lopez, of the Welfare Rights Initiative (WRI), was inspired by her mother, a dislocated worker from Puerto Rico, to get a college degree. Beatrice said her mother “used education to permanently move off welfare.” Not only does a college education offer material reward; low income women who get an education inspire their children to follow in their paths.

All of the workshop panelists had at some point worked on the higher education option within the framework of a coalition. Hannah Oakman, drawing on her experience in Pennsylvania, felt that colleges and grassroots organizations must engage each other; activists can reach out to and organize recipients, while coalitions provide strength in numbers through sharing information, experiences, ideas

and staff. Organizing and working as coalitions shows student parents that others share their plight.

In order to most effectively organize around welfare reform, panelists concurred in saying that advocates must work with low income people and not just for them. Beatrice Lopez suggested using “..those [who are] directly affected to challenge policies.” Three interrelated strategies evolved out of their discussion of advocacy and organizing: reaching the low income women; enabling them to advocate their interests; and dissemination of information to reach potential supporters.

Reaching the Target Population. There are many ways to reach students on public assistance. Lory Griffy suggested putting up flyers on college campuses and using legislation to make certain that welfare agencies are mandated to inform recipients that college is an option and that there are support services (if this is the case).

WROC posts and distributes information in places frequented by recipients, such as libraries, cafeteria, laundromats, and WIC centers. They also developed a “Take Five for Children” campaign. They made it easy for all students to become active by tabling and providing letter samples, fact sheets, envelopes and stamps. Their aim was to show students who complain they have no time or don’t know who or what to write that they can take action by taking a few minutes to write their legislators.

Hannah Oakman related how the Community College of Philadelphia was encouraged by PEN to carry out mass mailings to all students receiving full PELL grants (this resulted in identifying all low income people like those receiving Social Security Disability and the working poor). Post-secondary institutions such as Swarthmore College, Cheyney University, Lasalle University, the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology and Delaware Community College “opened their minds and doors” to information and assistance provided by welfare advocates and coalitions. Even the Ivy-league University of Pennsylvania responded to welfare reform through its Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development.

Enabling the Target Population. Most students benefit from learning leadership skills and organizing strategies, and other modes of developing social capital. WRI focuses on training student parents so that they can train others. They emphasize leadership training through seminars offered at Hunter College, and teach media skills so that student parents can effectively interact with the press and give useful testimony at hearings. Students receive college credits for leadership and media courses.

WRI also emphasizes using litigation to make policy changes, and has developed a working relationship with the CUNY Law School and New York City poverty lawyers.

Mentoring provides a means of enabling student recipients. People who have been on welfare or who understand the welfare system can provide valuable assistance and guidance to recipients by helping them determine what is needed for them to complete their degrees in a timely manner. Hannah Oakman made the case this way: “...securing a mentor in the second semester of college was what gave me the winning edge. Mentoring provides a student with the opportunity to ask questions, get advice, [and] learn how to best navigate the post secondary system.”

Another part of enabling students to participate in advocacy and organizing efforts requires securing resources that supplement student parents’ meager incomes. Martina Gillis discussed how her organization created a local scholarship fund for students receiving temporary assistance. Other forms of support include child care, and subsidies for transportation and college supplies. Two and four-year colleges, welfare agencies and community organizations can assist in developing programs and providing resources and information that meet the needs of student parents. Nancy Goodman of Wellspring House Inc., a faith-based community organization, explained how her organization works with a local community college to offer up to 12 college credits for participation in various programs they offer. Gillis advised working, whenever possible, to bring together academic and welfare “communities” to discuss problem-solving strategies.

Dissemination of Information to Potential Supporters. Coalition-building requires reaching out to potential allies, presupposing a need to disseminate information about the issue. There is almost no awareness among the general public that there are tens of thousands of students who receive public assistance. Even social justice, poverty, women’s, and welfare organizations may not be aware of the value of higher education to low income women’s self-sufficiency. Newsletters, editorials, press conferences, campus meetings, and posting flyers are all ways to reach out to different groups and to increase the general public’s awareness of the issue. On a more personal level, testimony given before the media and legislators can sometimes be an effective means of changing opinions and gaining support. All of the panelists vouched for the powerful impact of having welfare mothers and fathers tell policy makers what it’s like to juggle welfare, work, poverty and college, sharing their aspirations for

themselves and their children. Nina Dunning of WROC has used the strategy of enclosing pictures of her son with letters sent to legislators. Diana Spatz of LIFETIME believes strongly that powerful and strategically orchestrated testimony can change the opinions of some of the most rigid politicians.

State and County Welfare Agencies: Creative Ways to Encourage College

Facilitator: Charles R. Price, Howard Samuels State Management & Policy Center, New York, NY
Panelists: Judy Williams, Maine Department of Human Services, Augusta, ME
 Ruth Whitney, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Little Rock, AK
 Anna Ogaz, Pasadena City College, Pasadena, CA
 Sharon Perry, Kentucky Cabinet of Child and Family Services, Frankfort, KY
 Mary Anne Lee, Wyoming Department of Family Services, Cheyenne, WY

Workshop Description. Legislative change is meaningless without successful implementation. State and county welfare agencies are the key to implementing reforms, yet are often the most resistant to change and the most overlooked in the advocacy process.

State and county welfare bureaucracies are rarely thought of as potential partners in creating ways to encourage and support low income people's participation in higher education. The experience of students and advocates who have dealt with them probably justifies their opinion that welfare agencies are more likely to be obstacles than allies. However, some state and county bureaucracies are loosening restrictions on participation in higher education. Usually this shift comes about through legislative decree or executive order; Maine offers an example of change as a result of institutional collaboration.

Political Culture and Current Political Issues. The panelists offered insight into why and how bureaucracies can support post-secondary education. To some extent political culture and the current political climate help to explain a bureaucracy's attitude toward higher education. Maine, which has been progressive in supporting higher education for TANF recipients, has a political culture that values public services and problem-solving government. Judy Williams, Director of the Maine Department of Human Services, provided an illustration. While Maine has a respectable high school graduation rate, participation in post-secondary education is low. Public officials saw helping TANF recipients get college degrees as one way of solving their need for more college-educated citizens.

On the other hand, Kentucky's bureaucracy was reluctant to support the higher education

option. Initially the state bureaucracy read the TANF rules strictly and did not allow the higher education option, instead supporting short-term vocational training. Sharon Perry, Principal Assistant, Kentucky Cabinet of Child and Family Services, explained that the Cabinet felt that the federal legislation made them feel that if they supported the college option they would be labeled “too liberal.” After students and advocates built a coalition to push for reform and the state’s caseload dropped, the bureaucracy slowly came to support the higher education option. Now, as in Maine, public officials are seeking to develop a better educated workforce. Kentucky’s governor, like other governors in the current political climate, has proclaimed himself an “education governor.” In the face of these events the Kentucky bureaucracy has taken the higher education option to heart and is planning to expand access across the state.

Two aspects of the aggregate work participation rate (AWPR)⁷ are particularly relevant to the higher education option. First, the AWPR led many state bureaucracies, under fear of financial penalty, to focus on quickly decreasing their caseloads and not on implementing long-term, self-sufficiency programs. Supporting higher education, they assumed, would not do very much to help them cut the welfare rolls. Ruth Whitney, Director, Division of County Operations, Arkansas Department of Human Services, spoke of how the Arkansas legislature conditioned its support of the higher education option on whether the bureaucracy meets its AWPR. As long as the mandated AWPR is met, the bureaucracy can support higher education programs. In fact, all states are meeting or dramatically surpassing the AWPR, creating spectacular decreases in caseloads. As a result, many states are flush with unspent TANF funds.

Are states using surplus TANF funds for long-term self sufficiency programs and supportive services like child care? The answer is that very few are. California has committed \$65 million to community colleges to support child care, placements, campus-based welfare coordinators, curriculum development and work study. This investment is likely to have a direct impact on TANF students. There are approximately 140,000 TANF students in California’s community colleges, 90,000 of them being

⁷ According to federal law, each state must have a certain percentage of its welfare clients working in specific kinds of work activities. The AWPR, or overall rate, started at 25% in 1997 and increases five percent each year, reaching 50 percent in 2002 and thereafter. Many policymakers believed at first that participation in post-secondary education would not help them meet the AWPR. Thus, higher education was discouraged.

enrolled full-time. Kentucky has also devoted substantial funding to aiding TANF students. The state bureaucracy will be investing \$1 million into work study programs and restructuring their vocational and community colleges to form a more unified system. The investment in work study is of practical value since it can offer work experience and provide work on campus, eliminating the need to travel to meet work requirements at another location.

Strategies for Supporting Higher Education. There are many ways for states and bureaucracies to support their TANF clients' participation in higher education. Panelists gave examples of two broad approaches, both of which support post-secondary education outside of TANF: use of state maintenance of effort (MOE)⁸ funds and campus-based solutions. Maine and Wyoming are well-known cases because they are the only states that use MOE funds to support recipient's pursuit of higher education. Although the MOE programs are outside of TANF, their implementation still requires the participation of the bureaucracies. In Wyoming and Maine the proposal and implementation of a higher education option came about through coalition building, although the process was more accommodative in Maine than in Wyoming.

In terms of support, TANF students greatly benefit from access to child care, tutors and/or mentoring, subsidies for transportation and college-related expenses (like books), and work study jobs that keep them on or near campus.

Maine created a special higher education program, *Parents as Scholars* (PAS), that can accommodate up to 2000 public assistance recipients. PAS participants receive cash benefits equivalent to what they are eligible for under TANF. They have access to supportive services such as child care and transportation subsidies which are not paid for with federal TANF monies.

Wyoming assists the pursuit of higher education through two programs. The primary program is a network of skills training centers coordinated by the state's community colleges. The secondary program is the State Adult Student Financial Aid program (SASFAs). SASFAs provides grants to needy students. While Maine has been working to fill its 2000 PAS slots, Wyoming's implementation has been less successful. Wyoming recipients find it difficult to meet the exacting higher education regulations. As

⁸ The federal legislation requires that states spend a specified amount of their own money, (Maintenance of Effort dollars) for services that benefit needy families.

Mary Anne Lee, Administrator of the Programs & Policy Division, Wyoming Department of Family Services wrote, “As a result we have a smaller percentage of students choosing post-secondary education as their work component, but those who are attending school are not failing and are getting degrees.”

California’s counties have great discretion in implementing TANF plans. Besides access to work study and child care programs, TANF students at some campuses have access to coordinators that serve as a liaison between the Cal-WORKS program and TANF students. The coordinators are based on the campuses. Their purpose, according to Ana Ogaz, CalWORKS Coordinator at Pasadena City College, is to “work to keep students in school.” Ana Ogaz reiterated the point about line personnel not being thoroughly familiar with the new rules and telling students that college was not one of their options. CalWORKS coordinators work with legal rights attorneys to ensure student’s rights are protected, they host job fairs, initiate appeals for denied students, and furnish information about resources that TANF students need to stay in school.

Kentucky is preparing to offer a novel incentive to TANF students. Depending on what level of education is attained, said Sharon Perry, a “bonus is given to the student upon timely completion of a given program.”

Cooperation, Collaboration and Coordination. A dominant theme that emerged from the discussion is the importance of cooperation and finding a “middle ground.” Ana Ogaz asserted that “dialogue is important to keeping the option going. You have to talk to the different groups about problems, what is working, what doesn’t and what can we do [about what doesn’t work].” The Arkansas bureaucracy is collaborating with post-secondary institutions and employers. Government officials noticed that too many of their TANF recipients were moving from the “Work First” program into low wage jobs. After getting legislative support for higher education, Ruth Whitney’s agency brought in employers who offer the top five most demanded job positions in Arkansas. The question they asked the employers was, said Ruth Whitney, “How can we get our TANF people into your jobs?” Through remediation and the higher education option, the agency’s goal is getting clients jobs that pay \$10-15 per hour.

Judy Williams noted that consensus in Maine was built on recognition that all parties wanted to

see TANF recipients working. The agency and advocates understood the value of post-secondary education and were able to convince policymakers that their desire to see people working would be better served if qualified students could get college degrees. Williams says she believes that “TANF and PAS have the same goals: self-sufficiency.”

Sharon Perry emphasized the importance of the various parties needing to come together on a middle ground as she talked about ambitious plans for her state’s agency. Perry wants to have a conversation that asks “What do TANF students need?” Answering this question, she adds, will require that universities, colleges, the state department of education, coalitions and the students sit together to talk and reach a middle ground.

Kentucky’s bureaucracy would like to become more closely linked to higher education institutions as part of a campaign to raise state educational levels. They would like to have campus-based coordinators at all the community college campuses. The coordinators would be responsible for making sure that students know what resources are available to them. A member of the audience restated the importance of campus-based coordinators this way: “It is very important for students to have an identifiable person as a contact, so [that] they don’t get overwhelmed by the organizational bureaucracy.”

The audience added to the information provided by the panelists. They stressed that social workers need to be brought into the discussion of the higher education option. It was also emphasized by audience and panelists that the higher education option can be implemented without “extra funding,” although additional funds allow for provision of a wider range of services. Two student parents, one from St. Paul’s College (Virginia) and the other from George Washington University (Washington, D.C.), recommended that post-secondary institutions and bureaucracies consider providing access to on-campus housing. This would support studying and escape from distractive environments.

SATURDAY MORNING PLENARY

Windows of Opportunity

Lena Frescas Dobbs, Executive Director, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), opened the plenary by providing background to WOW’s two decades of involvement in welfare issues. Lena

emphasized that WOW has learned from the past mistakes of advocacy organizations, especially the failure to have more influence on the 1996 welfare legislation.

Lena Dobbs emphasized the need to take a multi-faceted approach toward poverty alleviation strategies. WOW has developed a six-pronged strategy to assist low income women and their families in “climbing out of poverty.” The strategies are: 1) develop a benchmark self-sufficiency standard that defines what it takes to live without public assistance; 2) prepare women for high wage jobs; 3) ensure that women get access to a functional education; 4) prepare women for non-traditional employment; 5) teach women about micro-enterprise; and 6) use individual development accounts as a means of helping low income women build capital. She went on to accentuate the fact that the current strong economy provides a potentially favorable environment for addressing higher education and public assistance issues.

Although Lena Dobbs pointed to the strong economy as a “window of possibility,” welfare reform has not allowed recipients the chance to capitalize on this favorable environment. Clifford Marshall, an employment specialist with the COPE program at Bronx Community College, illustrated the magnitude of the loss by drawing on U.S. Department of Education statistics. Clifford said that in 1997 seventeen per cent of TANF students dropped out of higher education, and this rose to 28 per cent in 1998. Cathy Lange, of the Potomac Knowledge Way project, showed the loss in a different light. She spoke of the “shortage of trained workers,” and added that the new jobs created in this booming economy require employees who are “ongoing learners” and have a broad learning base, such as provided by a liberal arts education. However, students who have dropped out of higher education have incurred an opportunity cost that they might be unable to recoup.

Rebecca Sharf of the Welfare Law Center went into more detail by pointing out four specific ways to take advantage of the current “windows of opportunity”: 1) emphasize how higher education will help to meet the demand for more trained workers; 2) use the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in ways that support the higher education aspirations of individuals; 3) make the higher education option a cornerstone of the 2001 re-authorization of TANF; and 4), make the higher education option an issue in 2000 elections.

WORKSHOPS

A College Educated Workforce: Strategies and Model Programs for Employers

Friday Workshop

Facilitator: Kim Pate, Wider Opportunities for Women, Washington, D.C.

Panelists: Clifford Marshall, COPE Program, Bronx Community College

* Rebecca Sharf, Welfare Law Center, New York, NY

* Evelyn Parra-Rodriguez, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Washington, D.C.

* Faith Horns, former TANF/College Student, Washington, D.C.

Saturday Workshop

Facilitator: Mary Janney, Wider Opportunities for Women, Washington, DC

Panelists:

* Clifford Marshall, COPE Program, Bronx Community College, Bronx, NY

* Rebecca Sharf, Welfare Law Center, New York, NY

* Evelyn Parra-Rodriguez, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Washington, DC

Workshop Description. Recent court cases and legislation involving TANF recipients, businesses and the states have created a climate conducive to partnership-building between universities, community colleges, businesses and advocacy organizations. This partnership should be built around contributing to the development of a college-educated workforce. Just as important, though, is the need to build human capital that can take advantage of a rapidly shifting employment market, and to develop strategies for disseminating information about the benefits of a college-educated workforce to employers.

Human Capital Development. The role of human capital investment is fundamental to getting low income people into jobs that pay. Higher education is a primary mode of developing human capital. But even within higher education there are factors that are often not emphasized. Clifford Marshall suggested that low income students need to be taught to “talk the talk of business,” meaning that students must learn what terminology and experience will engage prospective employers. Another important detail that is overlooked, is, said Marshall, “A four year college education teaches human capital skills such as networking and socialization.”

The development of human capital can be approached in different ways. Rebecca Sharf discussed how the Low Income Networking Communication (LINC) project works to build grassroots community-based organizational (CBO) and individual capacity “ by developing skills and technologies that allow success in the workplace.” Sharf recommends the integration of technology into advocacy

work since this “helps to build access to the job market” and “can be used as an organizing tool.” Through internet communication and web sites individuals and groups can create platforms that support the higher education and employment agenda.

Disseminating information about the higher education option is equally important to employer-focused strategies. Recipients must be able to get information about opportunities that make them more employable, such as internships. The importance of this should not be ignored. For instance, Faith Horns, a former TANF student, who now has a B.A. in social work from the University of the District of Columbia, explained that “college is not talked about” in relation to public assistance recipients. She did not know the higher education option was a policy issue that has been long debated. At the same time, she was lucky that she found an internship that she “converted to a real job.” Opportunities such as college and internships must be more effectively advertised.

The audience reiterated many of the points made by the panelists. Individuals stressed the creation of internship positions, which would be facilitated through the creation of partnerships between businesses, universities and colleges, and advocates. Also, more effective strategies for getting employers, especially the Fortune 500 companies, to understand the value of a college-educated workforce need to be utilized.

Building the Case for College: Existing Research and Gathering New Data

Friday Workshop

Facilitator: Michelle Alexander, University of Maine, Portland, ME

Panelists:

- * Cheryl Fong, Coordinator, Cooperative Agency Resources for Education, Sunnyvale, CA
- * Dr. Bonnie Braun, University of Maryland, College Park, MD
- * Dr. Luisa Deprez, University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME
- * Andrew Gruber, Esq., Mayer, Brown & Platt, Chicago, IL
- * Julie Strawn, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, D.C.

Saturday Workshop

Facilitator: Patricia Allen, College Task Force, New York, NY

Panelists:

- * Dr. Dale Weaver, Cal-State University, Los Angeles, CA
- * Kathy Ertter, University of California-Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
- * Dr. Peggy Kahn, Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan, Flint, MI
- * Nancy Boldt, Champlain College Single Parents Program, Burlington, VT
- * Sandra Chapin, LIFETIME, Berkeley, California
- * Michelle Alexander and Dodie Clendenning, University of Maine-Orono, Orono, ME

Workshop Description. The aim of this session was to bring together researchers to discuss what kinds of research exists and what additional data is needed to create policies and programs that support low income women's participation in higher education. Most of the existing but sparse research on TANF recipients who earn college degrees shows positive outcomes, including increased earnings ability economic stability and improved self-esteem. However, barriers to collecting data and building strong, unified databases remain, hampering the capacity of activists and advocates to better inform policy makers and to adequately address student needs.

A general consensus developed around a need to conduct research that shows the importance of building linkages between institutions and between faculty and TANF students. Within this context, defining research issues and appropriate methodologies was another central concern. Panelists and participants in the audience focused on how research should be oriented toward policy needs, and should be able to provide more detail than strictly quantitative and experimental studies.

Using Research to Create and Enhance Linkages. Dale Weaver, a professor at California State University-Los Angeles, advocates building linkages between the community colleges and state universities. In California the vast majority of TANF students are in the community colleges, and many of these schools have experience in tracking and supporting their public assistance student population. More specifically, Weaver suggested that CalWORKS coordinators serve as the bridge between the community colleges and state universities. A similar strategy could be applied in those states that have a separate community college and university system.

More than 140,000 TANF recipients in California attend the state's 107 community colleges, and approximately 20,000 more attend the California state universities (CSUs). Around 20 percent of California's 800,000 TANF recipients are attending college. Most are "self initiated participants" (SIPs). Because SIPs take it upon themselves to enroll in college, they present policy-relevant questions about which clients should have access to college. Why have SIPs chosen college while other potentially qualified clients haven't? Researchers must such address "motivational" and "barrier" issues.

The immense size of the California TANF student population made welfare reform a priority issue for the campuses. Dale Weaver noted that welfare reform was a "wake-up call for the California State Universities, which ...[were] suddenly faced with a number of students in crisis, the potential loss

of these students, and a threat to the legitimacy of higher education for low income people.” Although declines in their welfare student population were not as drastic as in some states, there were losses nonetheless. For instance, at Laney College in Oakland, there were more than 1500 public assistance recipients prior to 1996; enrollment has now dropped to less than 1000. Approximately one-half of these students are recent immigrants of Asian extraction (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian) and are enrolled in English as Second Language courses.

While linking together post-secondary education systems that serve different populations is important, so too is building bridges with state and county welfare agencies. In general they have the kinds of data that are important to large and long-term research projects. Dale Weaver sees collaboration with bureaucracies as necessary. Some colleges in California are reaching out to case workers by offering them special courses and programs. It is argued that additional training will make them more effective in delivering direct services under welfare reform. It is also a way to build a relationship between a college and a bureaucracy.

Developing interpersonal linkages between academics, advocates and TANF students is another dimension critical to building the case for college. For instance, the Department of Social Work at CSU-Los Angeles has created a special course for low income students called the “Parent Advocate Service Seminar.” The course also draws on the Public Counsel Law Center staff to help train students in advocacy. The course has three central aims: teaching low income parents about the history and theory of welfare efforts in the U.S.; training students to be capable advocates; and to create a “...mutual support system and the guidance necessary for them to continue their education while maintaining good standing with current welfare work mandates.”

Peggy Kahn, a professor affiliated with the Center for the Education of Women, and her colleagues at the University of Michigan-Flint offer another lesson. Kahn said that “[we have] ...advocated for individual students we have interviewed, and directly mailed all identifiable student-clients on our campuses information about somewhat more favorable policies enacted...but still not being implemented....” They also help students put students in touch with useful campus contacts.

Laney College offers a third example. Using funds obtained from the California State Chancellor’s office, they are conducting a longitudinal study of low income student parents, and are

training clients to help carry out the study (see below).

Gathering New Data. Workshop panelists noted that if the aim is to influence policy, then policy needs should shape the research agenda. In order to get policymakers to take notice, it is essential to be able to identify the number of public assistance recipients who are in college. Colleges are not mandated by law to collect this information and, combined with confidentiality laws, institutions are either reluctant or unlikely to identify welfare students. Dale Weaver stressed that financial aid offices are probably the best available avenue for collecting data that identifies the number of temporary assistance recipients in college.

Peggy Kahn stressed how much of the research on welfare and the higher education option is framed within the “dominant policy discourse,” which tends to “...address the college option in quantitative terms.” While some quantitative research is necessary, she asserted that there is also “...need to document ethnographically, in a more richly textured way the experience of single-mother students...systematic ethnography identifies patterns of policy impacts relevant to policymakers, [because] richly textured accounts of individual lives are often useful in addressing a broader public, and intimate knowledge of the experience of clients provides a strong basis for individual advocacy and work with implementing agencies.” Such research can be easily consumed by the public and media. Kahn also uses ethnographic data when she testifies before legislative committees.

Dale Weaver’s research questions key out a need to document the higher education experiences and motivations of low income students: how are they similar to and different from other students? How do they juggle multiple responsibilities like work, school and childcare? How does welfare inform their education and how does higher education inform their understanding of welfare issues? Why do some recipients choose the higher education option and others do not? Addressing such questions implies using qualitative approaches in conjunction with quantifiable methodologies such as surveys.

Another research strategy that should be more widely used is the longitudinal study. Sandra Chapin, a TANF recipient majoring in sociology at Mills College in Oakland, California, was recently selected to serve as project coordinator for a five-year study that will track 100 Cal-WORKS women at Laney College as they complete education and training programs and enter the workforce. This

research model offers great promise. It grew out of a collaboration with researchers from across the country and will train and employ CalWORKS students who are social science majors to conduct in-depth interviews. These trained students will also serve as “Peer Advisors” and counselors to study participants and other TANF students. They will be required to build relationships with study participants before the in-depth interviews begin.

Dale Weaver identified two pivotal advantages offered by longer-term research agendas. One is to “address the relative benefits to recipients and to society of immediate job placement versus the possibility of greater future wages,” and the other is to “consider program and research issues together.” As there is an immediate need for programs, the development of programs will help to define what are the critical research needs.

Implicit in all of the discussions was the need to be aware of how to present the higher education option to different audiences. For example, strategies for engaging legislators and the general public might need to be radically different, depending on other contextual factors.

Model College and University Programs for Low Income Women

Friday Workshop

Facilitator: Richelle Friedman, PBVM, McAuley Institute, Silver Spring, MD

Panelists:

- * Dr. Amata Miller, IHM, Marygrove College, Detroit, MI
- * Dr. Veronica Morgan-Lee, Carlow College, Pittsburgh, PA
- * Diane Wartchow, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
- * Michelle Payton-Garrett, Students Against the Work Experience Program, Staten Island, NY

Saturday Workshop

Facilitator: Susan Rees, McAuley Institute, Silver Spring, MD

Panelists:

- * Christina Kerr, MSW, Trinity/Burlington Colleges, Burlington, VT
- * Dr. Gloria Randel Scott, Bennett College, Greensboro, NC
- * Terri B. Hawthorne, Metropolitan State University, St. Paul, MN
- * Karen Gray, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH

Workshop Description. Education is critical to creating greater economic security for low-income women and their families. Both private and public colleges and universities with the mission of educating low-income students remain committed to this goal. There are numerous models for enhancing low-income women’s participation in higher education. Particularly important to creating and sustaining such model programs are collaborations between colleges, government bureaucracies and local

communities. This workshop showcased successful models of providing educational opportunities for low-income women, and presented the perspective of a low-income woman overcoming the obstacles to obtaining an education.

Re-framing Prevailing Discourses. A recurrent theme of this workshop drew attention to the need to re-frame current discourses on welfare. Ideologically-charged phrases such as “work first” and “personal responsibility” take attention away from the fundamental claim of welfare reform: to promote self-sufficiency. Bennett College President Gloria Randel Scott argued that one way to frame the higher education option is in terms of promoting the general welfare, which is consistent with the U.S. Constitution and American conceptions of democracy. The keystone to self-sufficiency, contended President Scott, is higher education. She noted that there is a “...direct-line relationship between education and economic self-sufficiency...[and] between salary and level of education...the higher the level of education...the higher the salary one receives.” She added that low-income women need support in becoming self-sufficient, which at a minimum, must include “...systems to bolster self-esteem” and access to child care, and transportation.

Terry Hawthorne, of Metropolitan State University Women’s Center, suggested using the phrase “workforce development” when speaking to legislators about welfare reform and the higher education option. This emphasizes how society will benefit from educating welfare recipients instead of focusing on what the individual will be getting through a college degree.

The Higher Education Option in Service to the Community. Some faith-based groups such as the Sisters of Mercy build a sense of social justice into innovative programs for low-income women. Christina Kerr, Director of the Community Service Scholars Program, Trinity College, discussed her collaborative program. The Community Service Scholar Program (CSSP) is a cooperative venture between Vermont’s TANF program *Reach Up*, the state legislature, and Trinity College. The CSSP provides a \$3,000 scholarship to public assistance recipients enrolled in college full-time in exchange for six hours per week of community service. Christina Kerr says that in creating the program, the goal was to “...improve participant service markedly by having a client case manager on campus....all *Reach Up* students would have the same case manager and the *Reach Up* worker would be an employee of the college...helping students gain access to other college departments and personnel. The *Reach Up*

worker provides in-house advocacy for her students.”

The CSSP allows five years to finish a four year program and three years to finish a two year degree. Needs such as transportation, child care, books, and clothes are subsidized through the program. As a result of negotiation between the bureaucracy and college, work requirements are reduced while the student is enrolled full-time. Through the CSSP student parents develop “enduring relationships” with each other.

Small Community-Based Colleges and Low-Income Students. The small, community-based college provides an ideal means of making higher education accessible to low-income people. These neighborhood-based institutions are likely to understand what residents need to take full advantage of higher education. Carlow Hill College, a Catholic liberal arts college, serves Pittsburgh’s predominantly African American Hill District. Veronica Morgan-Lee, Director of the College, noted that one of the missions of the college is the “education of women as leaders and lifelong learners,” and that “When you educate women, you educate children and everybody else whose lives they touch.” Carlow Hill College “...brings higher education to the African American Hill community and becomes a partner in building community leadership and economic development.” Low-cost child care is provided (\$1 per week for 15 weeks), which is all-important since 96 percent of the student body receives financial aid. Enrollment is kept low so that personalized, high quality education is provided. *U.S. News and World Report* has ranked Carlow among the the best small comprehensive colleges in the East. The college supports other community needs by providing a Children’s Program and an Entrepreneurial Center that assists in developing the human capital needed to establish small business start-ups.

Marygrove College offers another example of how the small college can tailor its programs to the needs of low income community residents. Located in the middle of Detroit, Michigan, Marygrove’s average student is a thirty year-old African American woman. Dr. Amata Miller, Marygrove’s Vice President for Finance and Administration, said that the college’s mission is to provide programs that empower disadvantaged groups. Marygrove offers a variety of programs to its 1000 students, eighty-five percent of whom are women. The most popular program is social work.

Marygrove recognizes the non-traditional character of its students and this is reflected in its policies and programs. Admission criteria are flexible and rely heavily upon personal interviews. Entering

students must write an essay on career goals. A placement test helps determine what special needs a student might have, such as basic skills remediation. The college emphasizes writing skills and has ten tutors staffing the writing center. Peer tutoring and “careful, committed advisors” help guarantee that students have sufficient support as they complete their course work. Other specialized programs and services include health and wellness services, a job placement and student employment center, and financial aid counseling.

Alternative Strategies that Colleges Can Use. Because a university or college does not offer a special program for low-income students does not mean that it cannot support the higher education option. Metropolitan State University (MSU) administrators, faculty and staff recognized that welfare reform would have a detrimental impact on their low-income students. Estimates from Minnesota state universities and community colleges reported enrollment losses of public assistance recipients between 50 and 78 percent. An associate academic dean responded by appointing the MSU Women’s Center to train faculty, staff and students about welfare reform, and how to network to keep low-income students in school.

Terri Hawthorne said that the MSU strategies for addressing welfare reform included: identifying students at high risk of dropping out because of welfare reform; connecting them to sources of financial aid, work study, scholarships, grants and community-based resources; bringing “affected students together” to share resources and ideas; and working on changing public policies. Central to their efforts was joining a large coalition of like-minded organizations, the Minnesota Affirmative Options Coalition (AOC). The AOC is a state-wide coalition of over 70 organizations committed to eradicating poverty. The decision by the Women’s Center to join the coalition was born out of a recognition of the importance of organizing and political action to promotion of the higher education option. The coalition provides access to a range of expertise and services that support MSU’s goal. MSU created a web-based information clearing house on welfare reform and the higher education option and conducted workshops on identifying scholarships and financial aid. Important coalition-building and networking efforts included linking with the National Women’s Studies Association, and creating a welfare reform and higher education committee.

Although a special program for student parents was not created at MSU, resources and

personnel were channeled toward finding ways to keep their low-income students in school, to engage in coalition-building, and to educate the local community about the adverse effects of welfare reform upon becoming self-sufficient.

The Human Dimension of Special Programs. Students who receive Temporary Assistance often need more support to remain in school than other students. Besides being single mothers and juggling work, family and college, and securing reliable transportation, some of these students suffer from domestic violence, depression, low self-esteem and the lack of a peer support network. Many college programs aimed at low-income students address these “special” needs. The Student Parent HELP Center, located at the University of Minnesota, assists single parents. The program began in 1967 and now annually assists around 300 students. The Center, with a paid staff of three, coordinates child care and evening classes and pays for tuition and books for parents. Diane Wartchow, Program Director of the Student Parent HELP Center, serves as an advocate for student parents and does fundraising and liaison work to keep the program going. Wartchow stressed that the program aims to create a sense of community among the parents. For example, the HELP Center provides a study space for participants. These supports have made it possible for participants to achieve a G.P.A. of 3.0.

Students who use the HELP Center program find it very accommodating, as Crystal Callaghan’s case illustrates. A strict interpretation of TANF by Minnesota’s bureaucracy caused them to overlook the proven value of support programs in retaining and graduating low-income students in higher education. Callaghan, a TANF recipient and participant in the University of Minnesota Student Parent MFIP Program⁹ (SPMP), provided insight into some of the auxiliary benefits of special programs for TANF students. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (MDHS) recently decided to deny TANF recipients access to the SPMP on the grounds that course work does not constitute a work activity and that participation violates the one year limit on post-secondary education. Callaghan, however, risked being sanctioned in order to remain in the program, which prepares participants for campus-based, entry-level, civil service jobs. She emphasized how the program contributes to the

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MFIP is the acronym for Minnesota’s TANF program, Minnesota Family Investment Program.

development of women's self-esteem and confidence. The SPMP provides a peer support network through which student parents are able to share their experiences. Callaghan also mentioned the positive effect it has on children to see their parents studying and taking pride in getting good grades.

Working Within and Outside TANF: Model State Programs and Legislation

Friday Workshop

Facilitator: Kathleen Stoll, Center for Women Policy Studies, Washington, DC

Panelists:

- * Erika Kates, Welfare Education Training Access Coalition, Waltham, MA
- * State Senator Jeanne Kolh-Welles, Washington State Senator, Seattle, WA
- * Mark Greenberg, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC
- * Elizabeth Wehner, Legal Aid Society, Charleston, WV

Saturday Workshop

Facilitator: Tanya Chin Ross, Center for Women Policy Studies, Washington, DC

Panelists:

- * State Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Washington State Senate, Seattle, WA
- * Diana Spatz, LIFETIME, Berkeley, CA
- * Elizabeth Wehner, Legal Aid Society of Charleston, Charleston, WV
- * Kathleen Stoll, Center for Women Policy Studies, Washington, DC

Workshop Description. This workshop and corresponding roundtable focused on innovative state initiatives. It provided a forum for low-income activists, state legislators, and advocates to discuss different approaches (under the final regulations recently released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) to allow TANF recipients to pursue post-secondary education.

The exclusion of higher education from PRWORA and state welfare plans has been recognized by the federal government. The Department of Health and Human Services, in its final TANF regulations (April 1999), encouraged states to find ways to provide education for Temporary Assistance recipients. States now have no reason to fear federal penalties for promoting education for welfare recipients. According to Kathleen Stoll, Director of Public Policy for The Center for Women Policy Studies, "Federal regulations allow 12 things to count as work requirements, and school can be fitted under a few of them...states that want to allow school to count can."

Wages and Income. Washington state Senator Jeanne Kolh-Welles, current chair of the Washington State Senate Higher Education Committee, began her discussion by pointing out the things

that Washington is doing right in regards to improving the lives of poor people. Washington, which has the highest minimum wage in the nation (\$5.70 now, rising to \$6.50 in 2000), has indexed the minimum wage to inflation.¹⁰ WorkFirst, Washington's TANF program, created a WorkFirst Call Center, which requires caseworkers to keep in touch with clients after job placement. The goal of the program is to "offer a range of services designed to help them (TANF clients) stay employed, get a better job or get training to gain additional skills. The WorkFirst Post-Employment Labor Exchange works with clients to find means to improve earnings after employment. Provision of child care services at colleges is now supported through the Washington for Student Child Care in Higher Education program. The two-year program was created through a bill (SB 5277) sponsored by Senator Kohl-Welles during the 1999 legislative session. Funding for the Child Care program is provided by the state (\$250,000 for two years) and requires matching funds from participating colleges and universities.

But despite the efforts of Washington legislators and bureaucrats to improve the job participation rates and earnings of low income people, they forbid the most potent means— a college education. Senator Kohl-Welles sponsored Senate Bill 5655 in 1999, which would have created a *Parent as Scholars* program similar to Maine's. The bill would have allowed at least two years of higher education while providing a living stipend and subsidies for child care. The bill died in committee. However, advocates were able to work with the state welfare bureaucracy and get it to change the regulations to allow work study to meet work participation requirements.

Senator Kohl-Welles explained that some legislators questioned SB 5655, asking "Why should poor women get special treatment?" The Senator's response is that higher education is an assured means to self-sufficiency, while the other approaches have not proven themselves to be effective means of alleviating poverty and reducing recidivism. She restated this point in closing: "You need it [higher education] to compete for more and more jobs. It's the price of admission to the middle class. It should be an option for poor women and middle class kids alike."

Creative Options for Meeting TANF Work Requirements. Elizabeth Wehner, staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Charleston, creatively used welfare recipient case histories to illustrate

¹⁰ Even this "high" minimum wage is not enough to lift a family out of poverty. Fifty weeks of 40 hour work weeks provides \$13,000 in before-tax income.

barriers to higher education and how to get around them.

One option for getting around work barriers is to ask that volunteer activities count as work. “Natalie,” a TANF client and college senior with a high G.P.A., was told that she would have to work 20 hours per week off-campus if she wanted to finish school and receive TANF. Yet, Natalie had been actively participating in school life. She was participating in volunteer activities for more than 20 hours per week: ten hours as a tutor; eleven with a service club and the campus NAACP chapter, and reading to children at her son’s elementary school. Natalie sought counsel with Legal Services. The staff attorney and Natalie decided to ask that her volunteer activities count toward work participation requirements. An agreement was made with the caseworker and Natalie was allowed to continue receiving TANF as long as she provided proof that she was volunteering 20 hours per week. Proof in this case meant getting signed time sheets from the places where she volunteered. Natalie’s staff attorney advised that clients take an attorney or some witness with them when trying to negotiate with case workers. In the attorney’s opinion case workers are more likely to act fairly when an observer is present.

TANF Clients are supposed to be able to take part in developing their Personal Responsibility work plans, although the details vary by state. Clients should approach college officials about helping them find campus-based work, and creating a Personal Responsibility plan around campus work. “Gina,” a mother of three and into her third year of a computer program with a high rate of job placement, applied for TANF in 1998. Gina had separated from an abusive husband, and found she could not handle college and working part-time, taking care of the children, and commuting to day care and school. Plus she was not making enough money. The West Virginia Works program told her that getting a college education does not count as a work activity. Legal Aid counseled Gina to get her college’s financial aid and student services offices to help her find a work study job and then help her create her own Personal Responsibility plan along with the case worker and Legal Aid.

“Dreama,” a 35 year old mother of three, shows some of the shortcomings of work first policies and why a college education is important. Dreama lost her low wage job, and being unable to get child support from the father, had to apply for TANF. Dreama, after speaking with a Legal Aid attorney, decided that she preferred education or training instead of the first job that came along. Although the

attorney suggested Dreama contact the local community college or Americorps, she ended up in a six-week TANF training program. Wehner pointed out that after the program, Dreama “...was unable to find a job in the county where she lived. She ended up back at the elementary school mopping floors...”

The Importance of Political Savvy. Senator Kohl-Welles and Representative Viola Baskerville (D-VA) emphasized how important it is for recipients and advocates to understand local and state politics. Senator Kohl-Welles called for everyone to “...learn about what state agencies do and how they work...[in order to] understand the political context and fiscal constraints of your state.” Representative Baskerville offered detailed advice. She said “Understand the political landscape, try to recognize factions within parties, work with moderate Republicans, [and] don’t assume that because a person is in one party or another that you already know their position or that they will be unchanging in their attitudes.” Diana Spatz, Executive Director of LIFETIME, added that it is important for students and clients to find out how their state’s surplus TANF funds are being used, and to ask that unspent funds be invested in education for low-income people.

Community-Based Organizations: Creative Approaches to Encourage College

Facilitator: Eileen Paul, McAuley Institute, Sulver Spring, MD
Panelists: Jeanne Koster, South Dakota Peace and Justice Center, Watertown, SD
 Julie K. Elliot-Gable, University of Wisconsin-Rock County, Janesville, WI
 Mary Tacelli, ODWIN Learning Center, Dorchester, MA
 Patti Davis, New Hope, Inc., Wichita, KS

Workshop Description. Community-based organizations that work firsthand with welfare recipients understand the importance of a college education as the path to economic independence. These organizations are engaged in building support for post-secondary education and in facilitating opportunities for TANF recipients to further their education. This workshop highlighted successful approaches to advocacy and to creating programs for TANF recipients that encourage education.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) offer another way to make higher education accessible to low income people. CBOs that offer higher education programs, like the small community-based

college, expose community members to higher education possibilities. Individuals who never considered enrolling in a college might take a couple of courses at a CBO. Three issues define the relevance of the CBO to the higher education option: 1) individualized attention and a local orientation; 2) preparation of people for college studies; and 3), partnership and funding concerns.

Individualized Attention and a Local Orientation. It is not uncommon to hear college students complain that they do not receive enough personal attention during their academic career. Mentoring, counseling, and tutoring are services that for some students can make the difference between completing and not completing the degree. The CBO programs discussed at the conference make priority the providing individualized attention to students in a community setting.

Project AHEAD (Adult Higher Education & Development), is a community-based pre-collegiate program located in the Janesville-Beloit area of Rock county, Wisconsin. The community consists largely of minorities and low income people. The goal of Project AHEAD is to provide the support that will allow “disadvantaged populations” to complete their degrees. Wisconsin’s W-2 (Wisconsin Works) TANF program is among the nation’s most restrictive of access to higher education. Wisconsin advocates for the higher education option worked to protect those recipients already enrolled in college, but only 3,500 of more than 13,000 welfare recipients pursuing higher education were allowed to continue their education, and these could continue their studies only to June 30, 1997. Approximately one-half of the welfare students at the University of Wisconsin-Rock dropped out between 1996 and 1997 as a result of welfare reform. University of Wisconsin-Rock reacted to welfare reform’s negative impact on college participation by developing Project AHEAD and the W-2 School Initiative Program. The School Initiative program provides economically disadvantaged citizens with financial assistance, and support services such as childcare, transportation, book and testing fees.

Reflecting the make-up of the areas population, most of the people participating in Project AHEAD are minorities and/or low income. Because the educational backgrounds and needs of the participants differ greatly, Julie Elliott-Gable, Director of Project AHEAD, ensures that service plans are individualized. Elliott-Gable says that “There is no set time frame participants are given to complete the program...I work with each participant for as long as we feel it is beneficial. And where one participant may need many services and close direction, another may need very little direction and only

occasional contact.” The capacity to address the specific needs of each student sets the CBO apart from colleges and universities that do not have special programs for low income student parents.

The ODWIN (Opening Doors Wider in Nursing) Learning Center in Dorchester, Massachusetts, focuses on providing the academic training and skills to prepare people for professional work in the health care industry. ODWIN, founded in 1964, has maintained its original mission of “counteracting poverty” by helping “non-traditional” people (e. g., minorities, low income citizens, those with a limited education) enter the health sectors, and to “counteract racism and sexism, two of the key causes of the conditions that create poverty.” ODWIN has served more than 16,000 people since its inception, and more than 3,000 of them have been either unemployed, underemployed, or have received public assistance. ODWIN Executive Director, Mary Tacelli, pointed out how each ODWIN student is given an initial diagnostic test to determine their strengths and weaknesses. The test results are the basis for designing an individualized education plan. Courses are offered in a sequence appropriate to the student’s skills and needs. ODWIN’s individualized approach is combined with services such as time management and problem-solving training and assistance in applying to post-secondary educational institutions. The ODWIN combination of individualized attention and support services within a community context allows people to quickly develop the needed skills.

The importance of individualized attention in low income people’s pursuit of a college degree cannot be overstated. Patti Davis, Executive Director of New Hope Inc., a non-profit organization that provides transitional housing and support services to survivors of domestic violence, furnishes a different example of how individualized attention promotes academic success. Davis, a former welfare recipient and survivor of domestic violence, and mother of five, fortuitously gained access to a higher education program. Two supportive caseworkers helped her gain entry to a college program and assisted Davis with tasks such as applying for financial aid. Davis made the honor roll every semester, which made it easier for her stay in college. In 1990 she received an associate’s degree and in 1992 graduated Cum Laude with a bachelor’s degree. She landed a job with the county and in 1995 received a Master’s degree in public administration. Given her understanding of the welfare system, domestic violence, and the importance of gaining self-esteem, Davis took on a job as the Executive Director of New Hope. As Davis’s story makes clear, personalized attention is invaluable to those who have special needs; she

took her experience and opportunity and returned it local level by working in a CBO.

Preparing People for College Studies. A notable function of many CBO-based higher education programs is that they prepare people for college. The individualized attention helps individuals develop skills such as productive study habits, essay writing, and test-taking, before they entering college. The CBO can provide a lasting positive orientation for those who are unprepared for the demands of college study. According to Mary Tacelli, “When a student participates in ODWIN prior to enrolling in college, that person’s likelihood of success shoots up to 90 percent or better as compared with both the regional and national norms of between 40% and 60% for recent high school graduates.”

Project AHEAD helps adults define their personal and educational goals by exposing them to and allowing them to explore higher education. The Project provides counseling and encouragement, college preparation such filling out admission and financial aid forms, and makes referrals to local agencies, based on the needs of participants. In terms of its higher education goals, Project AHEAD measures success by the number of students who enter post-secondary education programs. The preferred outcome is to get students admitted into the University of Wisconsin-Rock.

Partnership and Funding Issues. In creating their higher education programs, CBOs build and maintain partnerships that facilitate attaining their goals. Personnel at the University of Wisconsin-Rock took an activist stance toward protecting welfare recipient’s access to higher education, and assisted in the creation of Project AHEAD, and later, the W-2 School Initiative Program. Project AHEAD required a partnership between the University, the community, the Merrill County Community Center in Beloit, Wisconsin. Project AHEAD does not have sufficient revenue to provide direct financial aid to students, but assists them in finding funding.

The W-2 School Initiative Program was renamed Partnership for Parents in 1998. The program is triangulated with the University’s TRIO Academic Skills Program. The Program is aimed directly at single parents and welfare recipients and is funded mainly by donations from area organizations and individuals. The goal is to secure funds to fully support up to ten participants each semester, although increased costs and budget shortfalls have led to some retrenchment.

The ODWIN Learning Center has always had to rely on private sector support. Because of its pre-college education focus and the fact that programs have an open time frame (students progress at

the rate consistent with their needs and demands on their time), ODWIN is unable to depend upon acquiring public monies. ODWIN is not a job training center, but readies participants for professional employment. Although this requires ODWIN to constantly seek funding from diverse sources, it keeps them free of many of the restrictions that come with public sector funds. As a result, ODWIN is able to structure and change its programs as it needs.

THEMATIC SUMMARY OF THE ROUNDTABLES AND CLOSING PLENARY

The roundtables were smaller, interactive versions of the workshops. The facilitators and participants used information gleaned from the workshops to identify work that needs to be done and to develop next-step strategies. The discussions were summarized and most of the points below presented in the closing plenary.

The points delivered in the closing plenary were presented under the roundtable headings, and mailed to all conference participants by the McAuley Institute. The Institute noted that their summaries could have been grouped according to major themes. We have reorganized the closing plenary summaries according to prevalent themes. The major themes are: 1) collaborative efforts and network building; 2) legislative and regulatory changes; 3) crafting and marketing media messages; 4) marketing students and the higher education option; 5) data needs; 6) disseminating information; 7) local, state and national politics; and 8), prioritizing the role and needs of TANF students. The themes should not be thought of as discrete categories and separate strategies; we have simply sorted out important points and issues. They are all interconnected. Some points are relevant to more than one category, and where this is conspicuous we list them under more than one heading.

Collaborative Efforts and Network Building

- Create a political and social movement
- Build coalitions among diverse groups of professionals ranging from artists to doctors.
- Support organizing efforts of TANF recipients
- Urge colleges & universities not to exist in isolation, but integrate themselves with other research, legislative and advocacy related groups
- A national conference should follow on this one next year

- Create partnerships between four-year institutions and Native-American colleges, most of which are two-year institutions. Involve students with a focus on the needs of Native-American women
- Tap into community institutions for support, such as funding for transportation
- Use the conference to build a national network, governed by low-income people, to communicate by the Internet and use local disseminators to spread updates to those without Internet access
- Link with faith-based networks in the states, as they are usually trusted and regarded as neutral
- Form Workforce Investment Act coalitions across sectors
- Create a national coalition with paid staff and welfare moms at the core
- In coalition-building, have a clear mission, and involve lawyers, nonprofits, advocacy groups
- Mobilize all stakeholders
- Reach out to and organize students
- Chat rooms on web site for collaborative efforts
- Collaboration among state colleges and universities to develop local state databases
- Collaborating with other community services, including the county, department of human services and community development organizations
- Establish collaboration between employers, training institutions, and students

Legislative and Regulatory Changes

- Review Wyoming, Illinois and other state laws for language on education and stopping the clock for satisfactory progress
- Make our democracy work for the constitutional mandate "to promote the general welfare." In part, that means federal dollars, our money, should be used for education in colleges and universities
- Address the need for due process in TANF appeals and assure complete and timely redress.
- Increase child care and transportation options

Crafting and Marketing Media Messages

- "All women's work is valuable"
- Jobs must pay a living wage. Mount a "truth campaign" on jobs that are short-term and dead-end
- Re-frame welfare reform issues in terms of the working poor
- Use "family values" language to reach politicians
- Have more dialog on the human level. Let TANF mothers speak
- Separate TANF and work issues
- Re-frame the debate. People "glaze over" when they hear griping and whining. Use different spokespeople and words
- Use the media strategically

Marketing Students and the Higher Education Option

- Write to all of the college presidents in the nation informing them of the outcome of this conference
- Make our democracy work for the constitutional mandate "to promote the general welfare." In part, that means federal dollars, our money, should be used for education in colleges and universities
- A minimum goal for all should be a bachelor's degree
- A national conference should follow on this one next year
- In marketing, use the key facts, such as those in Sen. Wellstone's letter. Vehicles can include public service announcements produced through the Extension Service, prototype op-eds, public TV and radio access, and celebrity programs such as Oprah Winfrey's
- Invite policy makers to visit your turf
- Recruit "grass-tops" (influential leaders in the community or people who personally know policy makers) to deliver our message.
- Get educational institutions' presidents and faculties to buy in and become involved.
- Build a case not to squeeze adult students out of college. Higher education should be accessible to all, regardless of income or age. Take the emphasis off welfare recipients. Include gender, class and race in this policy context
- Raise the awareness university administrators regarding the college option
- Explore and develop a clear message to be conveyed to Congress and harmonize research with message development
- Assist potential employees in marketing themselves
- Invite employers to visit and meet potential employees
- Encourage employers to provide internships and mentoring programs

Data Needs

- Distribute information, including a time line, on the reauthorization in 2001 of the Personal Responsibility Act
- Monitor and document so we know what is happening and can answer questions
- Obtain local information on job sectors that are growing

Develop a clearinghouse, via a Web site and list serve, to disseminate:

- Analysis of state policies;
- Re-examine assumptions made about TANF students;
- A master research matrix;
- Report cards on votes and positions taken by policy makers;
- Calls for research collaboration;
- Lists of supportive funders and advocacy for shifting research priorities;
- Research priorities identified by a group such as the one at this roundtable;
- Data pools not previously analyzed;
- Common protocols to use in developing a data bank, including bios of students that can be analyzed quantitatively;
- Web journal for publishing articles;
- Community colleges can assist in compiling data on the economic base. California and Massachusetts have guidelines for organizing data;
- Letters to the Department of Education to restore TANF questions on college financial aid forms that were recently removed.

Disseminating Information

- Help get everyone in the network on the Internet.
- A communications structure such as a list serve and web access, is needed in the interim
- A campaign is needed to bring this issue to the attention of major educational associations and institutions to make this a high priority
- Share legislative language of state bills that can serve as models
- Chat rooms on web site for collaborative efforts
- College syllabi and materials
- Web journal for publishing articles

Local, State and National Politics

- Get candidates to address the issues
- Have more dialog on the human level. Let TANF mothers speak
- Get-out-the vote and register new voters
- Create a platform and hold officials accountable to it
- Develop ongoing relationships with politicians
- Understand how legislatures work, their environment and what they deal with
- Explore and develop a clear message to be conveyed to Congress and harmonize research with message development

Prioritizing the Role and Needs of TANF Students

- Have more dialog on the human level. Let TANF mothers speak
- Support organizing efforts of TANF recipients
- Tap into community institutions for support such as transportation funding
- Secure funds for all types of child care options
- Create a community of support made up of TANF moms and students
- Create a national coalition with paid staff and welfare moms at the core
- Reach out to and organize students
- Train students in research methods, possibly using a documentary
- Increase child care and transportation options
- Encourage employers to provide internships and mentoring programs
- Institute a universal, three-week computer skills course

CLOSING SUMMARY

The national conference “Welfare Reform and the College Option” left participants energized and motivated to renew their commitment to advocacy, organizing and research activities. Top priorities identified include: the need for facilitating collaborative ventures between researchers, colleges, community-based organizations, employers and students; and, the creation of a national network. Conference participants want to see a widely spread emergence of robust coalitions that take the form of a political and social movement. CUNY’s Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, and the grassroots student parent-focused group LIFETIME, were among the organizations at the conference who committed themselves to facilitating the development of a national network.

In order for proponents of the college option to continue their work, they will have to meet

more regularly to network and develop strategies. Some suggested the need for another national conference. In the meanwhile, efforts at collaboration and coalition-building can proceed apace through the use of new communication technologies such as electronic mail and the Internet.

Much of the change needed to advance the college option must occur at the local and state level. The implementation of special programs for low income women will largely take place on college campuses and in community-based organizations. Progressive regulatory and legislative changes are most likely to come out of state and county welfare agencies, local governments and state legislatures. Change is unlikely to happen without organized action and coalition-building. The role of academic researchers at institutions of higher education is critical to providing the kinds of data and research that advocates need to make political arguments and develop comprehensive programs. A dense network through which advocates can communicate strategies and best-practices will further the aim of making higher education a viable option for all low income people.

We must be sure that the students themselves are at the forefront of promoting the higher education option. Their recounting of their experiences to legislators and administrators has sometimes been decisive in getting the option. Equally important, engaging in political action trains students in leadership and advocacy skills; they learn the ins and outs of how their government works and how to make it work for them when it doesn't. And, in order to get low-income students engaged in promoting their own interests and needs, they need support: access to reliable child care and subsidies for transportation, college supplies and basic needs.

Poverty in America, an enduring paradox for the world's wealthiest nation, can be reduced by helping people take advantage of higher education, especially through training in a broad-based liberal arts program. A bachelor's degree is a proven antidote to economic dependence and lack of social mobility. But this solution is not widely known. The 21st century economy will require a highly educated and flexible workforce-- people who can handle multiple job responsibilities and problem-solve on their own. It is our responsibility as researchers, student parents, academics, advocates and policymakers to get the message out: higher education is one of the best routes to self-sufficiency and building a progressive, forward-looking society.