

Access and Equal Opportunity

AACRAO firmly supports the principle that the doors of higher education must be open to all qualified students regardless of their financial resources and that, in fact, access and equal opportunity for all are the bulwarks of a thriving democracy.

AACRAO members represent the most diverse educational system in the world, from open-access community colleges to large research universities. Yet, all are united by a commitment to expand the number of qualified students who attend college, to increase completion and graduation rates for all students, and to support at-risk students so that they may have the tools and skills to succeed.

AACRAO and its members believe that improving access to higher education is one of the most important investments this nation can make. It has paid off in the development of a robust knowledge-based economy as well as in the ability of those who reap the benefits of higher education to reach their full potential. Now, these investments are more critical than ever. The nation's continued economic strength and security and the quality of life of its citizens depend upon increasing both access to and completion rates for college.

There is much to be done. Only 24 percent of first-generation students succeed in earning a bachelor's degree across all colleges and universities. Students from low and moderate income families graduate at lower rates, as do students from underrepresented groups. Federal and state cutbacks have made tuition more difficult to pay for many students from underrepresented minorities and families with low and moderate income. Meanwhile, the number of high school graduates without the resources to finance further education will increase dramatically in the next decade. AACRAO supports policies and practices that reduce the access and opportunity gap for the benefit of a better nation and a better world.