



Educated Illegal Immigrants Bring Fiscal Gain

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By Ronald Trowbridge

Ronald Reagan once said, “Don’t be afraid to see what you see.” The current flap over Gov. Rick Perry’s defense of in-state tuition for students whose parents are in the United States illegally drives us to take off the lid and take a peek.

And what we see is that illegal-immigrant students pay back more than they take.

Daniel Griswold, an immigration expert at Cato Institute, wrote to me recently in response to my inquiry, “In 1997, the National Research Council published a major study on immigration. It found that an immigrant with a college education is a huge net plus for the United States.”

Griswold reports this finding of the NRC study: “Immigrants and their descendants represent a net fiscal gain for the United States. The typical immigrant and all of his or her descendants represent a positive \$80,000 fiscal gain to the government. An immigrant with more than a high school education (plus descendants) represents a \$198,000 fiscal gain, one with a high school diploma a \$51,000 gain, and one with less than a high school education a \$13,000 loss.”

Some will counter that college slots for illegal immigrants should be given instead to poor U.S.-born students. But most of these students cannot afford college. Tuition, for example, at Texas’ universities will average this year about \$8,500, and the College Board projects that the average student’s living expenses will be \$17,820 -- for a total of \$26,320. Multiplying this figure by five — now the Texas standard for number of years to graduation -- totals \$131,600.

But total costs will be higher than this. In Texas between 1999 and 2010, average tuition and related fees at the state’s 10 largest universities rose by 120 percent. Tuition and fee increases of 10 percent a year will raise the figure of \$131,600 to \$160,591 in five years.

Let us look at immigrant subsidies, using Texas A&M University as a representative example. In-state tuition there is \$8,418, out-of-state tuition \$23,808 -- a yearly subsidy

to illegal immigrants of \$15,390. The total for five years is \$76,950, plus a 10 percent annual increase in tuition -- for a grand total subsidy of \$93,957. Subtracting \$93,957 from the \$198,000 fiscal gain that the NRC study documented leaves a net gain of \$104,043.

Presently, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reports that Texas colleges and universities currently enroll slightly more than 1.5 million students. Hispanic enrollment numbers are up this year by 4.5 percent -- a very small increase in a state where 40 percent of all residents are Hispanic.

The number of illegal immigrants enrolled in public four-year colleges and universities in Texas totals 4,000, while the number in community colleges totals 12,000 -- still a very small percentage in a state that is 40 percent Hispanic. The in-state tuition subsidy in community colleges to illegal immigrants is about \$2,000 a year. At Lone Star Community College, where I teach, in-state tuition is \$1,744, out-of-state tuition \$3,844.

This is part of a larger problem and pattern. An October study by the American Enterprise institute entitled "[Cheap for Whom?](#)" finds: "Average taxpayers provide more in subsidies to elite public and private schools than to the less competitive schools where their own children are likely being educated."

The dirty little secret that universities and state and federal legislators don't want the public to know is that these universities and legislators are de facto agents of class warfare. Note the shocking disparity between the rich and the poor that AEI reports: "Among not-for-profit institutions, the amount of taxpayer subsidies hovers between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per student per year until we turn to the most selective institutions.... Among these already well-endowed institutions, the taxpayer subsidy jumps substantially to more than \$13,000 per student per year."

It is class warfare. AEI argues, "If the country is to retain its competitive edge, it must reverse the current policies that result in providing the lowest levels of taxpayer support to the institutions that enroll the highest percentage of low-income, nontraditional, and minority students -- the fastest-growing segments of the population."

And this should include illegal-immigrant students, who are residents of the state and pay sales and property taxes. They will pay back more than they take.

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2011/11/17/essay-educated-illegal-immigrants-are-net-financial-gain-us#ixzz1e4Qep1uG>
Inside Higher Ed