

**2008 AIR DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP PROPOSAL**

**Money Matters: Parental Awareness of Financial Aid and Students' College Expectations, Preparedness, and Enrollment**

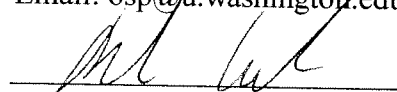
Data set of interest:  
National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988

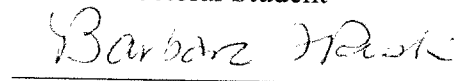
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## 2. Project Summary

Researchers consistently report that parents are the most influential “others” in a student’s college choice process (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative 2007). Parents’ knowledge of and access to financial aid significantly affect students’ college enrollment and completion rates (Dynarski 2003; St. John, Paulsen and Carter 2005; Perna 2000). Further study is needed, however, on the effect of parents’ awareness of financial aid opportunities on the earlier stages of the college choice process. The proposed study will examine the extent to which a parent’s knowledge of financial aid affects a student’s educational expectations, academic track and performance in high school, and steps toward preparing for and applying to college. Because previous research has suggested that factors predicting college enrollment depend on students’ race and class (Kao and Thompson 2003; Perna 2000), this study will also examine how awareness of financial aid may differentially affect educational outcomes based on the intersection of a student’s race and socioeconomic status.

The primary objective of this research is to discover the ways in which parents’ financial aid knowledge affects students’ behavior in the college choice process and to specify the magnitude of these effects at the separate stages of the process and by students’ racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. A second objective is to inform educational researchers and policymakers on how to design and target policies that will increase the likelihood that economically disadvantaged students will be able to attend college. A third objective is to provide policymakers with the information necessary to devise strategies that will increase families’ awareness of financial aid opportunities, a goal which may help to narrow the enrollment gap between high- and low-income students.

This study will use the first four waves of the National Education Longitudinal Study which track nearly 15,000 students from 1988 when they were in the eighth grade to 1994, two years after their scheduled high school graduation. Controlling for individual and school level variables, the researcher will use hierarchical logistic regression models to estimate the effect of parents’ knowledge of financial aid on students’ educational expectations, school track and performance, likelihood of taking the SAT and applying to college, and the selectivity of the chosen college. Analyses will be undertaken to determine how students’ race and socioeconomic origins interact to affect the impact of parents’ financial aid awareness on students’ educational outcomes.

The proposed study will provide a better understanding of the effect of parents’ knowledge of financial aid, as well as the roles of race and socioeconomic status, on students’ behavior throughout the early stages of the college choice process. By considering the effect of parents’ financial aid awareness on students’ predispositions to

attend college, their performance in school, steps taken to prepare for college, and the eventual choice of whether or not to apply, this research will extend current literature which focuses almost entirely on the importance of financial aid in determining enrollment only after a student has already applied to college.

If the results of this study support the researcher's hypotheses that parents' knowledge of financial aid information does matter in the earlier stages of a student's college choice process, these findings will direct more attention to the importance of disseminating financial aid information earlier in the college choice process. In addition, the race and socioeconomic status interaction effect that will be included in the models could alert educational researchers of the extent to which the effect of parents' financial aid knowledge on student outcomes varies by race and class, allowing for the development of a more sophisticated model of the role of race and class in the college choice process.

This research is important to both policy and academic audiences. From a policy perspective, it will offer critical insight as to why certain students might be less able to translate their college aspirations into attainable outcomes. Results from this research may offer clear policy guidance to target financial aid information campaigns to certain groups that are least likely to have access to this knowledge. Students who believe they can pay for college are much more likely to apply and subsequently enroll in higher education (Avery and Kane 2004). An upsurge in the numbers of disadvantaged students who enroll in college could, in turn, increase the amount of diversity on college campuses, a goal which is more often cited by institutions of higher education than realized in their admissions offices.

The findings of this research will constitute a significant contribution to the academic fields of sociology and education. Little to no research has addressed the importance of financial aid information for students as they begin to formulate their college goals. This study aims to fill the gaps in the existing research and to explain the extent to which financial aid information shapes students' expectations along with the fulfillment of their higher education goals. In this way, the findings of this research will offer a more complete picture of how the institution of education can function - or fail to function - as a tool for social mobility. If researchers are to truly address the role that education plays in alleviating or reproducing existing inequalities, they must get serious about identifying the mechanisms that are responsible (Reskin 2003). By identifying and explaining the effect of parents' financial aid awareness on students' college goals and plans and the ways in which this effect varies by the interaction between race and socioeconomic status, this study will do just that.

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#### 4. Project Description

### **GRANT PROJECT TITLE: Money Matters: Parental Awareness of Financial Aid and Students' College Expectations, Preparedness, and Enrollment**

#### Statement of the Problem and Research Objectives

Inequality in the United States is skyrocketing and lack of access to higher education both contributes to and is exacerbated by this crisis (Morris and Western 1999; Breen and Jonsson 2005). Although a college degree has become increasingly important for labor market success (Carnevale & Fry 2000), access to this credential remains stratified by race and family income (Perna and Titus 2004; McPherson and Schapiro 1999). Low-income students and students of color are at a distinct disadvantage with respect to information about college and financial aid (Cabrera and LaNasa 2001; Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio 2003; Ikenberry and Hartle 1998), and it shows. The gap in college enrollment between low-income and high-income students stands at 30 percent (Perna 2002). Although college enrollment increased between 1990 and 2000 for African Americans and Latinos, both groups remain significantly underrepresented both as undergraduates and degree recipients (Perna 2000).

Researchers consistently report that parents are the most influential “others” in a student’s college choice process (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative 2007). Parents’ knowledge of and access to financial aid affect students’ college enrollment and completion rates (Dynarski 2003; St. John, Paulsen and Carter 2005; Perna 2000). Further study is needed, however, on the effect of parents’ awareness of financial aid opportunities on the development of a student’s educational expectations, their preparation for college and the likelihood that they will apply. The proposed study will examine to what extent a parent’s knowledge of financial aid opportunities affects a student’s participation in the college choice process, including her educational expectations, academic trajectory in high school, and steps toward preparing for and applying to college. Because previous research has suggested that factors predicting college enrollment depend on students’ race and class (Kao and Thompson 2003; Perna 2000), I will test how awareness of financial aid may differentially affect these outcomes based on the intersection of a student’s race and socioeconomic status.

The primary objective of this research is to discover the ways in which parents’ financial aid knowledge affects students’ behavior in the college choice process and to specify the magnitude of these effects at the separate stages of the process and by students’ racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. A second objective is to inform educational researchers and policymakers on how to design and target policies that will increase the likelihood that

economically disadvantaged students will be able to attend college. A third objective is to provide policymakers with the information necessary to devise strategies that will increase families' awareness of financial aid opportunities, a goal which may help to measurably narrow the enrollment gap between high- and low-income students.

#### Relationship to the Present State of Knowledge

A wealth of research has examined the factors that affect college attendance. One popular model of the college choice process suggests that there are three stages through which every college bound student progresses: *predisposition* to attend college, *search* for information about college, and the *choice* to enroll in college (Hossler, Braxton and Coppersmith 1989). Embedded in this process are students' expectations and college readiness, as well as the act of applying to college (Cabrera and La Nasa 2001). The factors that affect students' likelihood of attending college include contextual level variables such as peer effects, counseling resources, and the school's racial composition; parental involvement; school track; and financial aid received (Cheng and Starks 2002, Sokatch 2006, McDonough 1997, Frost 2007, Kim and Schneider 2005, Perna and Titus 2005, Lucas 2001, St. John, Paulsen and Carter 2005).

While financial aid offers play a large role in determining college attendance and persistence for disadvantaged students (St. John, Paulsen, and Carter 2005), researchers have tended to ignore the role of financial aid in the college choice process except in modeling the last stage—student enrollment. We know, for example, that disadvantaged students perceive cost as a barrier to enrollment in higher education and that they are more likely to attend college when they receive financial aid (Kao and Tienda 1998, Avery and Kane 2004, Abraham and Clark 2006). What we have yet to nail down is to what extent knowledge of the availability of financial aid affects students in the earlier stages of college choice as well. Awareness of financial aid could affect a student's *predisposition* to attend college, from the development of aspirations and expectations to the choice of courses in high school to the act of even applying to college. Indeed, recent research suggests that this is the case. Using survey data for seven low-income California high schools De La Rosa (2006) demonstrated that low-income students believe that college would be too expensive for them and that financial aid is not available to them. Moreover, students who expect to receive financial aid are more likely to aspire to college (King 1996). Finally, according to a recent study, parental knowledge of financial aid significantly increased the likelihood of

postsecondary enrollment (Charles, Roscigno and Torres 2007). These findings suggest that awareness of financial aid matters for the *predisposition* stage of the college application process and beyond.

In addition, only in the past decade have researchers begun to investigate differential enrollment behavior by students' racial and ethnic identities (Perna 2000). While researchers have established the effect of socioeconomic status on college enrollment (Cabrera and La Nasa 2001, Lucas 2001, St. John, Paulsen and Carter 2005), none has considered the possibility that the effect of socioeconomic status on enrollment behavior varies across race and ethnic groups. Although research shows racial and ethnic differences in college expectations, readiness, and enrollment behavior (Kao and Tienda 1998, Perna 2000, St. John, Paulsen and Carter 2005, Perna and Titus 2005, Hirschman and Lee 2005), studies have not included interaction effects between race and socioeconomic status.

There is reason to think that certain outcomes might vary not only by race and class independently, but multiplicatively. Middle-class blacks are not in comparable economic positions to middle-class whites in terms of wealth holdings and the racial composition of their surroundings, in the realms of both schools and housing (Shapiro 2004, Orfield 2001, Pattillo-McCoy 1999). Because black students more often than not live and study in racially segregated conditions (Massey and Denton 1993), parents' financial aid awareness may have a stronger effect on their educational outcomes than it does for white students who are economically similar. Indeed, it may be that, due to racial and economic segregation in schools and neighborhoods, the effect of parents' financial aid knowledge may be more similar for middle class black students and low-income white students than it is for middle class black students compared with middle class whites. Black students, like low-income white students, tend to be exposed primarily to members of their own group, both residentially and at school. In addition, the counseling resources in largely black and/or low-income schools tend to be of lower quality (Lee and Ekstrom 1987). Therefore, students in these circumstances who are not able to garner information about financial aid from their parents must learn what they can from their peers or school counselors. Odds are that their peers will also be lacking information (Cabrera and LaNasa 2001; Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio 2003; Ikenberry and Hartle 1998) and research suggests that, when their parents are unable to answer questions about college and financial aid, low-income students "are not more likely to receive help from their schools in applying to colleges" (Choy 2001). In recent focus groups both low-income rural and urban African-American high school students reported that their high school counselors did not effectively answer their questions about college (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative 2007).

In situations such as these, parents' awareness of financial aid becomes much more important than it would be were the student in an environment where she had access to informed peers and/or guidance counselors. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the effect of parents' financial aid awareness may vary concurrently by race and socioeconomic status. For this reason I include an interaction effect between race, socioeconomic status, and parents' awareness of financial aid in my explanatory models. This allows me to explore in what context and for whom parents' financial aid information matters most.

### Research Questions

The proposed study will investigate five questions. First, what factors predict parents' knowledge of financial aid options? Past research suggests that parents of low socioeconomic status and African-American and Latino parents are less likely to be informed about the college application process and accompanying sources of aid (Cabrera and La Nasa 2001). I expect that, in addition to socioeconomic status and race, parents' social networks, their expectations for and involvement with their students' education, and the counseling resources available at their children's schools will affect parents' knowledge of financial aid. I will test not only for racial and class differences in knowledge of financial aid, but also for the interaction of race and class on the likelihood that parents will possess knowledge of financial aid processes. Controlling for family background, measures of social capital, and student and school level variables, I will identify the factors that predict greater parental knowledge of financial aid.

Second, does knowledge of financial aid raise parental expectations for their students' educational attainment, as well as students' own expectations? If so, do these effects vary by race and socioeconomic status? Past qualitative research suggests that some students modify their educational expectations in response to perceived barriers of cost (Bettie 2003, Kao and Tienda 1998). If parents are knowledgeable about the availability of financial aid, does this translate into higher educational expectations on the part of both parents and students?

Third, does parental knowledge of financial aid opportunities influence a student's choice of high school courses? Research has demonstrated that a student's course load in high school influences college preparedness (Perna 2002). Are students whose parents have greater knowledge of available paths of financing their college education more likely to enroll in college preparatory classes? To what extent does the effect of parents' financial aid knowledge on course taking vary by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status?

Fourth, to what extent does awareness of aid increase the likelihood that a student will take the steps necessary to apply to college? Are students whose parents are knowledgeable about financial aid more likely to take

the SAT and to apply for college? If this is indeed the case, does this relationship vary by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status?

Fifth, to what extent does parental knowledge of aid predict a student's enrollment in college, as well as the type and selectivity of school in which she enrolls? Hypothetically, knowing more about available financial aid could expand a student's college application pool, making it possible for students to choose on criteria other than cost alone. Again, if indeed parent's knowledge of aid does impact college enrollment, does it vary in its effect by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status?

#### Data

I propose to use the first four waves of the National Education Longitudinal Study which track nearly 15,000 students from 1988 when they were in the eighth grade to 1994, two years after their scheduled high school graduation. The NELS data are well suited for this study. First, they allow me to observe students over time. Second, the NELS data are representative of the population, allowing for generalizability of the results. Third, the first and third waves are accompanied by surveys of students' parents which included detailed questions about their knowledge of and perceptions about financial aid, such as whether they believe their child will qualify for aid or if they have knowledge of grants and loans. Fourth, surveys of schools students attend are available for the first three waves of the student surveys. These surveys will allow for the inclusion of contextual controls (e.g., school racial demographics, percent of students in school who attend college).

Table 1 lists the variables I will include in each of the five models, organized by research question. Dependent variables include parent's awareness of financial aid (in the first model); students' and parents' educational expectations; high school course choice and performance; college behaviors (whether or not the student took the SAT and applied to college); and college enrollment, including the type of institution (i.e. two year community college vs. four year public university) and selectivity. My theoretically central independent variables in all but the first model are parents' awareness of financial aid, race, and socioeconomic status. I will operationalize parents' awareness of financial aid by creating an aggregate measure of parents' responses to survey items such as "I have not been able to get much information on how and where to apply for financial aid" and "I do not see any way of getting enough money for my eighth grader to go to college."

**Table 1. Variables to Include in Research Models**

	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3	Research Question 4	Research Question 5
<b>Dependent Variables</b>					
	Parents' Awareness of Financial Aid	Student and Parental Educational Expectations	Student Course Taking and Performance	Student Took the SAT by Fall of senior year/Student Applied to College	College Enrollment as of 1994/Selectivity of Chosen College or University
<b>Independent Variables</b>					
<i>Individual -Level</i>					
	Race of student	Parents' Awareness of Financial Aid	Parents' Awareness of Financial Aid	Parents' Awareness of Financial Aid	Parents' Awareness of Financial Aid
	Socioeconomic Status (Education/Occupational Status/Income)	Race of student	Race of student	Race of student	Race of student
	Race of student * SES	Socioeconomic Status (Education/Occupational Status/Income)	Socioeconomic Status (Education/Occupational Status/Income)	Socioeconomic Status (Education/Occupational Status/Income)	Socioeconomic Status (Education/Occupational Status/Income)
	Sex of parent	Race of student * SES	Race of student * SES	Race of student * SES	Race of student * SES
	Sex of student	Sex of parent	Sex of parent	Sex of parent	Sex of parent
	Social capital	Sex of student	Sex of student	Sex of student	Sex of student
	Student's School Performance	Social capital	Social capital	Social capital	Social capital
	Students' Friends Planning to go to College	Students' School Performance	Students' Friends Planning to go to College	Students' School Performance	Students' School Performance
	Intact Family	Student's Friends Planning to go to College	Intact Family	Students' Friends Planning to go to College	Students' Friends Planning to go to College
	Student/Parental Educational Expectations	Intact Family	Student/Parental Educational Expectations	Intact Family	Intact Family
	Parental Involvement (in School, at Home)	Parental Involvement (in School, at Home)	Parental Involvement (in School, at Home)	Student/Parental Educational Expectations	Student/Parental Educational Expectations
	Household Educational Resources	Household Educational Resources	Household Educational Resources	Parental Involvement (in School, at Home)	Parental Involvement (in School, at Home)
	Parents' Plans to Pay for College	Parents' Plans to Pay for College	Parents' Plans to Pay for College	Household Educational Resources	Household Educational Resources
				Parents' Plans to Pay for College	Parents' Plans to Pay for College
<i>School- Level</i>					
	Type of School (public, private, etc.)	Type of School (public, private, etc.)	Type of School (public, private, etc.)	Type of School (public, private, etc.)	Type of School (public, private, etc.)
	Counseling Resources	Counseling Resources	Counseling Resources	Counseling Resources	Counseling Resources
	% students attending college	% students attending college	% students attending college	% students attending college	% students attending college
	Urbanicity	Urbanicity	Urbanicity	Urbanicity	Urbanicity

Individual (student)- level control variables include sex, friends planning to go to college, self-reported school track/performance, number of siblings, intact family, student and parent educational expectations, parental involvement (at school, with other parents, with student), household educational resources, and parent's plans to pay for college.<sup>1</sup> School-level control variables include percentage of students who attended college after high school graduation, racial demographics, socioeconomic status, type of school (public vs. private), urbanicity, and a measure of counseling resources. I will operationalize counseling resources by creating an aggregate measure of school administration's responses to survey items such as how often staff assist students with college of financial aid applications.

### Methods

To address these questions I will use hierarchical logistic regression. Hierarchical models are appropriate because I plan to include both student level and school level variables. Because differences between schools may account for a portion of the variance in the dependent variables it is important to build this possibility into the model. Past research has demonstrated the importance of contextual variables, such as the content and structure of guidance counseling and school racial composition, in predicting educational expectations, college readiness and enrollment (McDonough 1997, Frost 2007). Importantly, hierarchical models allow me to test for interactions between school-level variables, such as counseling resources, and individual-level variables, such as parent's knowledge of financial aid in predicting students' expectations, college readiness, and enrollment. In addition, the use of hierarchical models also reduces the magnitude of aggregation bias and estimates more accurate standard errors (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). My use of hierarchical models mirrors the NELS data collection technique, which sampled schools first and then students within the schools (Thomas and Heck 2001).

### Innovative Aspects

The proposed study will provide a better understanding of the effect of parents' knowledge of financial aid, as well as the roles of race and socioeconomic status, on students' behavior throughout the early stages of the college choice process. By considering the effect of parents' financial aid awareness on students' predispositions to attend college, their performance in school, steps taken to prepare for college, and the eventual choice of whether or not to apply, I am extending current literature which focuses almost entirely on the importance of financial aid in

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<sup>1</sup> Control variables that also appear in the list of dependent variables are to be excluded from the model in which they also serve as an outcome variable.

determining enrollment only after a student has already applied to college. If I am correct in thinking that awareness of financial aid plays a role in the steps leading up to college enrollment, then previous analyses that have included this variable only when predicting a student's enrollment decision have provided only partial explanations of students' college decisions.

Recent research shows that low-income and first-generation students do not plan ahead for college like middle-income students do (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative 2007). I propose that part of the reason for this delayed action is because these students are much less likely to have access to financial aid information in the earlier stages of high school that would allow them to view college as a possibility. While a recent study demonstrated that middle-income families are more responsive to an increase in grants in the enrollment stage (Avery and Hoxby 2004), other researchers suggest that this does not illustrate low-income families' indifference to financial aid, but rather their limited awareness of how financial aid works (Carneiro and Heckman 2002, Kim 2004, King 2004, and De La Rosa 2006). Indeed, both students' and parents' knowledge about financial aid have significant, positive relationships with parents' income and education (Choy 2001). Other research shows that low-income students rely on their perceptions of financial aid rather than solid facts when making decisions about college (De La Rosa and Tierney 2006) and that economically disadvantaged students' paucity of good information affects the quality of the college choices that they make (Pope and Fermin 2003).

If the results of this study support my hypotheses that parents' knowledge of financial aid information does matter in the earlier stages of a student's college choice process, those findings will give policy makers the knowledge necessary to design programs targeted to the families who are most in need of information. More specifically, the race and socioeconomic status interaction effects that I am including in the models will alert educational researchers to what extent the effect of parents' knowledge of financial aid on student outcomes varies by race and class. By accounting for this interaction, the results will demonstrate not only the effect of financial aid information across race and class, but the effect specific to a students' race and socioeconomic status. This information should also allow for the development of policies that are even more closely targeted, identifying where along the college search process families differ by race and class and how policy makers can devise information campaigns to reduce these differences.

While this is the first quantitative study that proposes to look specifically at parents' knowledge of financial aid information as it affects the earlier stages of the college choice process, there have been programs designed to

disburse college and financial aid information to students before their junior and senior years of high school.

Indiana saw an increase of 8 percent in postsecondary enrollment from 1988 to 1992 that was largely attributed to the Postsecondary Encouragement Experiment, an early intervention program that gave out accurate college and financial aid information to students and parents in the ninth grade (Hossler and Schmit 1995). My proposed study could enlighten researchers and policymakers as to how exactly this intervention worked, by measuring the effect of financial aid information each step along the way as students, through their high school behaviors, move closer to or further away the choice to attend college.

I argue that a family's awareness of financial aid begins to influence a student's view of college far before their last year of college. If students do not believe they can pay for college, this could affect them not only in the choice phase, but also in the predisposition and search stages. If my research shows that parents' knowledge of financial aid affects students' beliefs and behaviors concerning college in the predisposition stage, then this has enormous implications for the ways in which we currently provide financial aid information to students. Rather than targeting students only as they begin to apply to college, we would need programs to inform students about financial aid options much earlier on in their education.

#### Policy Implications and Intended Audience

This research is important to both policy and academic audiences. From a policy perspective, it will offer critical insight as to why certain students might be less able to translate their college aspirations into attainable outcomes. Results from this research may offer clear policy guidance to target financial aid information campaigns to certain groups that are least likely to have access to this knowledge. Students who believe they can pay for college are much more likely to apply and subsequently enroll in higher education (Avery and Kane 2004). An upsurge in the numbers of disadvantaged students who enroll in college could, in turn, increase the amount of diversity on college campuses, a goal which is more often cited by institutions of higher education than realized in their admissions offices. Working to expand access to higher education for disadvantaged groups is vital to the reduction of racial and economic inequality in American society.

The findings of this research will constitute a significant contribution to the academic fields of sociology and education. Little to no research has addressed the importance of financial aid information for students as they begin to formulate their college goals. This study aims to fill the gaps in the existing research and to explain to what extent financial aid information shapes students' expectations along with the fulfillment of their higher education

goals. In this way, the findings of this research will offer a more complete picture of how the institution of education can function - or fail to function - as a tool for social mobility. This research is timely and necessary. If we are to truly address the role that education plays in alleviating or reproducing existing inequalities, we must get serious about identifying the mechanisms that are responsible (Reskin 2003). By identifying and explaining the effect of parents' financial aid awareness on students' college goals and plans, this study will do just that.

#### Relationship to Longer Term Goals of Research Plan

As a researcher I am concerned most strongly with issues of inequality that are and can be affected by policy. My work to date has focused largely on education and the ways in which educational policy affects unequal outcomes. My past research has focused on the effect of school choice policy on economic and racial segregation in public schools. As this proposal suggests, I am also particularly interested in the problem of stratified access to higher education. In this study and in future research I will work to discover not only the reasons for the racial and economic disparities in college attendance, but also the mechanisms that are responsible for these varying outcomes. The problem of access for disadvantaged students is both timely and important, as is evidenced by the recent change in policies colleges and universities across the nation have made in order to lessen the barriers of attendance for low-income students (Rimer and Finder 2007; Perry 2006). What I hope my research will demonstrate is that changes on the supply side will not suffice to narrow this gap. It is also important that students and their families are aware of the financial opportunities available to them and that schools implement college preparation programs and counseling resources for all and not only a select few. It is my goal as a researcher to work toward greater equality through the documentation of existing inequalities, the identification of mechanisms that foster these inequalities, and the development and testing of policies that can act as solutions to those problems identified.

#### Plan of Work

I have already ordered and obtained the NELS data from the National Center for Education Statistics. In June of 2008 I will begin to work with the data, readying the variables I will use for analysis. Simultaneously, I will delve into the relevant literature about college access and financial aid. In July 2008 I anticipate being able to begin analyses to answer my main research questions. I expect that analysis will last through December 2008, at which time I will also submit my progress report to the Association of Institutional Research. In the months of July through December I will also read research relating to each of my analyses and begin to draft a literature review for each chapter of my dissertation. Starting in January of 2009 I will begin to synthesize this review with the data

results, writing the first draft of my dissertation. During the months of January through April I will prepare chapters of my dissertation to submit as manuscripts to sociology and educational policy journals and conferences. In April of 2009 I anticipate having the first full draft of my dissertation completed. This will allow me the months of April and May to revise my dissertation in preparation for a defense date in June 2009.

#### Dissemination Plan

Because the findings of this research will be important and relevant to the disciplines of both education and sociology, I plan to present the results in the corresponding venues for each group. In order to disseminate my results to the education community, I plan to present research in relevant educational policy and institutional conferences and to submit manuscripts to educational policy journals. As part of this plan I will present the major findings of my dissertation research at the Annual AIR Forum in 2009. I also plan to submit one research paper to the 2009 American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting. In addition, I plan to submit manuscripts of my research to education and policy related journals such as *Research in Higher Education*, *American Educational Research Journal*, and *New Directions for Institutional Research*.

Because I am trained as a sociologist and my research focus and findings will be important for sociologists, I will disseminate findings in the sociological venues as well. I plan to submit two papers for the 2009 American Sociological Association meeting. In addition, I will submit articles for publication to top sociological journals (the *American Sociological Review*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, and *Social Forces*), as well as to the discipline's education related journal, *Sociology of Education*. I plan to present the findings of this research in presentations for the West Coast Poverty Center Seminar Series and the department of Sociology at the University of Washington. I will also discuss this research in job talks when I am on the academic job market in the fall of 2008.

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**6. Biographical Sketches**  
**Deborah Warnock, Doctoral Student**

I am a fifth year doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Washington, where my research has focused on inequalities in education and how policy contributes to these disparities. I have amassed experience through coursework, research assistantships, faculty collaborations and my own independent work. I have completed numerous courses in research and statistical methods as part of my doctoral coursework. I have worked in research positions at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education and at Microsoft Research. I have conducted my own research through my master's thesis work and during my year as a Fulbright Research Fellow. Finally, I have worked closely conducting research with faculty members. I possess the knowledge and experience necessary for the successful execution of this dissertation project.

Through coursework on statistical techniques and in my own research experience, I have acquired the skills necessary to conduct rigorous quantitative analysis. In addition to completing the four course statistics and methods core in the sociology department at the University of Washington, I have taken classes in hierarchical linear modeling and the use of the statistical programming language, R. I have used these skills in my research assistantship at the University of Washington's Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) and in my master's thesis. In my work at CRPE I conducted research on school choice policy using data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Common Core of Data (CCD). I used the SASS, a weighted sample survey, extensively in my analyses. As a result, I learned to use survey weights in statistical analyses. My experience working with a large and multi-faceted data set such as the SASS has prepared me to work with the data set I propose to use in my dissertation work, the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). I am experienced with the use of NCES data codebooks and with the steps necessary to merge data from the separate questionnaires in order to perform the analyses I propose to conduct.

I successfully made use of my knowledge of quantitative methods in my master's thesis, in which I used hierarchical linear models to measure the effects of school choice policy on racial and economic segregation in Ohio's public schools. Using data from the Common Core of Data and the School District Demographics System, as well as data I gathered from the Ohio Department of Education, I created a longitudinal data set. I tested my research hypotheses using hierarchical linear models, which I ran using the PROC MIXED procedure in SAS. I am prepared to use the same methods in order to analyze the NELS data for my dissertation research.

During the summer of 2004 I worked as research intern for the Social Computing Group at Microsoft Research. I created and administered a survey asking about participants' use of social computing. I then used linear regression to test hypotheses about different uses of social computing as they related to reported relationship satisfaction. In addition to this study, I conducted usability research in order to assist in the development of a new people-centric email client. The results of this study were published in a poster in the 2005 Conference on Computer Human Interaction (SIGCHI), a top-tier conference in that discipline.

I have also acquired research experience through collaboration with faculty. Most recently I have worked gathering and synthesizing research relevant to labor market discrimination for Professor Barbara Reskin. In earlier collaboration with faculty, I conducted research with Professor Steve Pfaff on the 1953 uprising in East Germany. As part of this collaboration, I collected data from multiple sources in order to create a data set with which we could test our hypotheses. I analyzed these data using logistic regression. I also collaborated in writing the paper. This work culminated in a paper we presented at the Social Science History Association Conference in 2004.

Finally, as a Fulbright Research Fellow in Berlin, Germany from 2002-03, I conducted research on the former German Democratic Republic, analyzing the role of music as a persuasion technique used by the government and as a form of rebellion by the East German youth. I interviewed East German scholars as well as former East Germans, collected relevant music samples, and researched the history of the GDR through text and film. Through this experience I learned not only how to conduct research in a foreign country, but also how to formulate my research questions into a study design and how to implement that design.

In conclusion, I have the professional experience, training and intellectual commitment to complete this project and disseminate its results. I am experienced in the use of large NCEs data sets and the use of survey weights as well as in the statistical methods necessary to perform the proposed research analyses. The Association for Institutional Research's dissertation fellowship would allow me to focus exclusively on my own research, giving me the time and support necessary to finish my dissertation in a timely manner and to widely publish my results. In addition to benefiting me as I prepare to enter the academic job market, it will also contribute to current dialogues in educational research by illuminating exactly when and how parents' knowledge of financial aid matters for students' college choices. After I complete my dissertation I plan to obtain an academic, tenure-track position that will allow me to continue to pursue my research interests of inequality in access to higher education. This fellowship would support my achieving these goals.

**Barbara Reskin, Faculty Dissertation Director**

Barbara Reskin is the S. Frank Miyamoto Professor of Sociology at the University of Washington, the department where she received a PhD in 1973. She came to the University of Washington from Harvard University in 2002. She previously taught at Ohio State University, the Universities of Illinois and Michigan, and Indiana University.

Most of Professor Reskin's research is in the area of stratification. Her early research focused on the sociology of science and higher education, especially with respect to sex differences. Over the last 25 years, she has specialized in sex and racial inequality in the workplace, an area in which she has published five books and several articles and chapters. These include two volumes published by the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council (where she served as a study director for a year) on sex segregation that review trends in segregation and interdisciplinary approaches to explaining segregation. After completing these books, she began a NSF-funded project that sought to understand women's historic gains in the 1970s and 1980s in a small number of customarily male occupations within a broader context of stability in occupations' sex composition. This project culminated in *Job Queues, Gender Queues* (coauthored with Patricia Roos) which expands on queuing theory, developed by Thurow and Lieberman, to stability and change in occupations' sex composition. This book included case studies—some of which Reskin coauthored with her graduate students—that illustrated these queuing processes at work.

During the 1990s, Reskin expanded her interest in workplace segregation to race and ethnicity as well as gender. Using detailed 1990 census data on race, ethnicity, and occupations, she examined their joint influence on workers' location in the occupational structure. This project assessed the extent to which census racial and ethnic categories capture meaningful differences in the occupational distributions across 60 groups defined by their members' race, Hispanicity, ancestry, and sex.

Understanding the slow pace of change in women's access to customarily male jobs led Professor Reskin to social psychological research on human cognition that has established the importance of automatic cognitive errors (stereotypes and ingroup preferences) that affect job assignment and promotion decisions through managerial discretion. This recognition pointed to the importance of organizational practices that, to varying degrees, invite or constrain the biasing effects of cognitive errors on job assignments. This influenced her research by (1) pointing to the importance of identifying the specific mechanisms that produce more or less inequality, and (2) suggesting that

the same organizational processes have the same effect for a variety of categorical distinctions such as race, ethnicity, and Hispanicity. Her research has become increasingly ecumenical in trying to explain the association between a variety of ascriptive characteristics and more or less desirable employment and other societal outcomes.

In the last several years, Dr. Reskin has concentrated increasingly on the importance of organizational practices and specific mechanisms on sex and race disparities in work outcomes. In identifying causal mechanisms rather than simply showing relationships and trends, she seeks to speak more directly to social policy. Examples of such mechanisms include nonstandard jobs and specific hiring practices. In her presidential address for the American Sociological Association five years ago, she called for greater attention by social scientists to identifying mechanisms associated with varying levels of inequality. She recently finished a pilot study of the locations and use of subprime credit markets (payday loans).

Reskin's teaching has been concentrated in undergraduate and graduate statistics, stratification, race, gender, and work. Throughout her career she has taken graduate student education very seriously. She has often coauthored with graduate students, and works very closely with her advisees on all aspects of their research and writing. She is notorious for her detailed comments on students' drafts (sometimes tape recorded). She has been recognized for her graduate and undergraduate teaching. She was the second recipient of the Cheryl Miller Award for Outstanding Mentoring, and has been honored by graduate students at departments where she has taught, including the University of Washington. Her standards are very high, and her students meet them. Her thesis and dissertation students are pursuing productive careers at research universities and nonprofit organizations including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the International Labor Organization, the Rand Corporation, and the Urban Institute.

Professor Reskin's scholarship has brought her several honors and awards. Within her professional association, the American Sociological Association (ASA), she has been a member of Council, Vice President, and later, President. She won its Distinguished Scholar Award for the Section on Sex and Gender and the American Sociological Association's 2008 Distinguished Scholar Award (just renamed the DuBois Distinguished Scholar Award). She has been a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Social and Behavioral Sciences and is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was recently elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences.

**7. Budget**

**GRANT PROJECT TITLE: Money Matters: Parental Awareness of Financial Aid and Students' College Expectations, Preparedness, and Enrollment**

Doctoral Student Salary	12 months @ 50% of \$1580/month	\$9480
Fringe Benefits	@ 9.3%	\$882
Travel: AIR Forum, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting		\$578
Other Direct Costs: Resident Tuition at the University of Washington	3 quarters @ \$3,020/quarter	\$9060
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT OF AWARD</b>		<b>\$20,000</b>

I am requesting grant funding for salary, benefits, and travel to conference meetings. Because I will need to register for a full-time load of doctoral dissertation credits in order to complete my doctoral degree, I have allowed funding to cover these tuition costs for all three quarters in the 2008-2009 academic year. Should I receive this grant I plan to devote my full time and energy to the completion of this dissertation research. For this reason I have allotted half of the grant funding to salary support at a rate of \$789, which meets the grant requirements for salary at less than half the wage of \$1580, the current doctoral candidate monthly allotment at the University of Washington. In addition, I have allowed the sum of \$578 to cover air travel expenses to both the 2009 AIR Forum and the 2009 American Educational Research Association meeting in economy class. The benefits are calculated at the University of Washington's approved rate with its cognizant agency; and the tuition is estimated for the 2008-09 academic year.

## 8. Current and Pending Support

### Deborah Warnock, Doctoral Student

1. Money Matters: Parental Awareness of Financial Aid and Students' College Expectations, Preparedness, and Enrollment

Status: Pending

Source: Association for Institutional Research

Amount of award: \$20,000

Period of Award: 6/1/2008-5/31/2009

Role: PI

Person-months per year committed to the project

Calendar: 9

Academic Year: 6.75

Summer: 2.25

2. Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship

Status: Pending

Source: Spencer Foundation

Amount of award: \$25,000

Period of Award: to be determined

Role: PI

Person-months per year committed to the project

Calendar: 9

Academic Year: 6.75

Summer: 2.25

**Barbara Reskin, Faculty Dissertation Director**

1. Money Matters: Parental Awareness of Financial Aid and Students' College Expectations, Preparedness, and Enrollment  
Status: Pending  
Source: Association for Institutional Research  
Amount of award: \$20,000  
Period of Award: 6/1/2008-5/31/2009  
Role: Mentor/Advisor  
Person-months per year committed to the project  
Calendar: .24  
Academic Year: 0.18  
Summer: 0.06
2. Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship  
Status: Pending  
Source: Spencer Foundation  
Amount of award: \$25,000  
Period of Award: to be determined  
Role: Mentor/Advisor  
Person-months per year committed to the project  
Calendar: .24  
Academic Year: 0.18  
Summer: 0.06
3. West Coast Poverty Center  
Status: Current  
Source: National Institutes of Health  
Amount of award: 1,497,472  
Period of Award: 10/1/2005-9/30/2008  
Role: Key Personnel  
Person-months per year committed to the project  
Calendar: 0.36  
Academic Year: 0.36  
Summer: 0.0

**9. Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources**

There are a variety of resources available to me at the University of Washington. I have access to two computer labs, the Sociology Department Graduate Student lab and the Center for Studies of Demography and Ecology lab, both of which have relevant and necessary statistical programs such as SAS, Stata, and SPSS. With access to the software and machines in these labs, I should have no trouble completing my dissertation research. In addition, there are a variety of statistical help sources on campus that I can utilize along the way to insure that I am executing this research in the most professional and methodologically advanced manner possible. These resources include the Center for Statistics and Social Science, the Statistical Consulting Service for the Social Sciences, the Center for Social Science Computation and Research, as well as the statistically gifted faculty of the University of Washington's Sociology department. Administrative support for managing the budget and payroll activities will be provided by the Department of Sociology's business office.

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**10. Special Information and Supplementary Documentation**

**This letter will be mailed and faxed.**