

**Case Study Paper Prepared for the Policy Forum on Higher Education Access  
and Success in the UK and the USA**

**California and London**

Tony Clark and Cheryl Blanco

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## **Introduction**

1. The study team comprised Tony Clark, Director of Higher Education, Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in London, and Cheryl Blanco, Director for Policy Analysis and Research, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) in Boulder, Colorado. (Mr Clark retired from the DfEE (now Department for Education and Skills - DfES) in June 2000 and continued as a consultant with the programme).
2. The California study was conducted in June 2000. The programme provided for discussions with the Chair of the Senate Education Committee, the Executive Director and staff of the California Post-secondary Education Commission (CPEC), the Assistant Secretary for Higher Education in the Governor's Office of Education, a vice-chancellor and senior staff of the California State University System Office, and the presidents and senior staff of two community colleges and the California State University, Long Beach.
3. The London study took place in July 2000 and included interviews with senior staff of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE); the higher education officer for the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE); a faculty member working closely with access issues at the national level; and vice-chancellors, principals, administrators, and faculty at several institutions – Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London; Barking College (a further education institution); the University of East London; the University of North London; and Newham Sixth Form College.
4. The team also had available briefing material on higher education in both countries as well as background papers prepared by Arthur M Hauptman, an education consultant for the United States, and Tony Clark.

## Findings: California

### State Context

5. The numbers enrolled by the community colleges and universities in California are expected to increase by between 25 and 35 percent by 2010. This reflects continued expansion of the Californian economy, together with increased demand in the labour market for highly skilled personnel. The impact of present university outreach programmes is also relevant. The increase is, however, mainly a result of demographic changes. The 18-19 age group is expected to grow annually by 3.5 percent (2.6 percent for the 20-24 age group), compared with an annual increase of 1.4 percent for the population as a whole. If recent trends are maintained, this forecast growth is likely to be funded, at least in part, by further increases in tuition fees both in state and independent universities. There will also be a need for total capital expenditure of \$1.5 billion, which exceeds by \$0.5 billion the present forecast of likely available capital spending by the state on higher education.

6. The demographic changes embrace substantial differences among racial/ethnic groups. The proportion in the white group will decline from 55 to 45 percent. The proportion of African Americans will remain steady at 7 percent (with about 6 percent of current students in universities). The proportion of Asian and Latino Americans will increase from 10 to 14 percent (with about 25 percent of current students) and 27 to 34 percent (with about 16 percent of current students) respectively. There are already high participation rates by Asians, but the substantial increase expected for Latino Americans will require a range of measures (or continuing measures) to widen present access.

7. An additional important factor in the state context is California's move away from affirmative action with the passage of Proposition 209 in 1996. The law prohibits decisions based on race in public education. This bears directly on decisions on admissions, financial aid and selection for outreach programmes. It remains permissible, however, to have regard to the impact of financial deprivation generally. The position is broadly the same as that which applies in England.

8. Given these challenges, the executive and legislative branches of the state government have reaffirmed their intentions to promote wider access to higher education. They will expand efforts to improve standards of attainment in schools. They will increase spending on special grants to students to support access, and will continue to support outreach programmes. But they will also look for greater effectiveness in the institutions, through evidence of institutional performance and strategies, to reduce permanently or retard growth in the costs of higher education in all sectors. They also expect further increases in tuition fees.

### Access Strategies

9. The strategy is essentially to extend current initiatives. There will be further investment to improve standards in schools, with greater accountability through performance measures and targets. Teacher education programmes will be strengthened and there are proposals for teachers to be exempt from state taxes. Outreach programmes will continue, mainly through collaboration between institutions and secondary schools. The state has allocated some \$25 million to improve algebra and reading through summer academies to assist admission to university. A further \$70 million is allocated to the University of

California to promote school-based activity prior to admission, and a further \$70 million is available to identify and assist Grade 10 pupils who are deemed suitable for entry to university (but unlikely to go without special help). There will be further attempts to ensure that high school graduates are offered access to post-secondary education that matches their aptitude and ability.

10. Student aid programmes have been extended, but the total cost in California has been estimated to be less than 10 percent of spending on higher education. There are federal programmes of grants and loans handled by institutions. There are guaranteed loans offered by private banks with federal financial support. The principal federal aid is through Pell Grants (\$7 billion compared with just under \$2 billion for campus-based programmes) which are means-tested and serve to subsidise fees. In addition, significant tax credits have recently been introduced to encourage families to save in advance for college. The Federal Government also allocates funds to offer support services for students and to target particular institutions providing for minority at-risk institutions.

11. Individual states also offer student aid. In California, there has been a consistent policy of holding down tuition fees at state colleges. At the state universities, fees are now about \$1,800 in the California State University system and \$4,000 in the University of California system a year (about a quarter of the costs) for residents of the state, which is significantly less than at the independent universities but close to fee levels in England and Wales. However, fees at the community colleges – which offer two-year programmes – are much less, at \$11 per credit or \$300 per year. Some specific student aid programmes have also been introduced by the state. About 25 percent (up from 18 percent) of those graduating from high schools can expect to receive merit based and means-tested Cal Grants to assist with fee payments. The state government has just announced expansion of the scheme next year on an entitlement basis.

12. Apart from special funding for outreach and other special initiatives to promote access and low fees, there are no general funding arrangements to encourage access. There are separate systems for community colleges, baccalaureate/Masters, and research/doctoral institutions. California State University system institutions receive much less (\$10,000) per student than University of California institutions (\$15,000) to allow for the extra cost of research, and the community colleges receive much less (\$3,500) again (although this takes no account of relatively lower completion rates).

13. Distance learning is growing, but still represents a small proportion of what is offered. The community colleges, and to a lesser extent the California State University institutions, receive help in kind and sometimes funding from business to assist teaching and learning. There are some multi-institutional initiatives.

14. As explained in paragraph 8, institutions in California are prohibited from setting admission policies by reference to ethnic minorities. They can, however, focus on particular local areas, and the California State University system aims to co-ordinate admission policies to ensure that there are places available near to different areas although not necessarily at the nearest university campus. There is also good articulation between the universities and community colleges, usually through the associate degree. The level of transfers is declining.

## **Institutional Best Practice**

15. The dominant access 'scheme' can be found in the arrangements for progression through the community colleges into the third year of a four-year degree. Nearly 85 percent of community college students live within 20 miles of their college. Over 50 percent of students enter the California State University system in this way, and a significant minority of students enter the University of California system through a community college. There is good articulation between an associate in arts degree (AA) taken at a community college and the four-year degree. On the other hand, much of the curriculum of the AA is concerned with basic skills and liberal arts rather than with specific vocational skills. Some students prefer to take vocational subjects at the community college and to leave as soon as a suitable job becomes available. Hence, under 20 percent of all students at the California community colleges transfer to university and the proportion is falling. At Sacramento City College, only about 1,000 students, or 5 percent, transfer to a public or private university annually. Furthermore, non-completion rates at community colleges are high at around 50 percent, reflecting the availability of jobs. Some young people from ethnic minorities see the community colleges as providing for middle-class students – although that is not borne out by the evidence. The community colleges also engage in outreach activity, in particular by offering advanced placement for high school students, who can take courses after school finishes each day.

16. California State University, Long Beach places much emphasis on outreach programmes to encourage students from poorer neighbourhoods to continue into post-secondary education. Thousands of young people are brought by bus to appreciate what the campus has to offer and are encouraged to spend a day there. They receive a certificate to record their day on the campus. The university is establishing a priority zone for admission within its neighbourhood, with 20 percent of entry places reserved for those within the zone. The university offers special in-service training for teachers in local schools to improve standards of teaching and to encourage teachers to raise expectations for students from poorer neighbourhoods. Individual faculties promote other outreach activities with local schools, including summer and weekend taster courses.

17. The State University system is planning for growth, which allows access initiatives to be planned as part of that growth.

## **Assessment of the Effectiveness of Access Strategies**

18. Establishing a culture of learning at elementary and secondary school is arguably the most effective strategy for widening access into higher education. Our study did not specifically address improving standards in schools. Nevertheless, it was clear from our discussions that the state attaches high priority to this. We endorse this.

19. A second essential requirement is that students believe that they will have the necessary financial resources to enter university or college. The multitude of financial aid provisions at federal and state level enables institutions to offer students a range of support, which normally enables this requirement to be met. Institutions confirmed that there were no significant problems over this. In any case, fees at community colleges are low and not usually a barrier to admission. On the other hand, there are

expectations in poorer communities that school leavers will obtain employment as soon as possible. Such students will not reach the stage of seeking help from a college in putting together an aid package. It seems doubtful whether such students will understand the plethora of aid available. Insofar as they do, they will note that much of the aid is not targeted and serves to benefit middle class students. We believe that there would be value in developing aid and tax concessions in a coordinated approach by federal and state governments to offer simpler and better-targeted aid schemes, which can readily be understood by poorer students.

20. The third access requirement is for suitable arrangements for progression through from school to university. The community college system in California has achieved a worldwide reputation for promoting this progression. More than 50 percent of students enter the California State University system through a community college, and this is a substantial achievement. However, the proportion of community college students transferring in this way is falling, and most community colleges do not appear to give priority to students taking an associate degree. That may reflect the wishes of students, particularly in view of the buoyant job market. We were told that a trained welder can earn a high salary in a short time. Nevertheless, and as the state has recognised, future demand in a knowledge economy is likely to be for graduates with four-year degrees. We believe that there is a case for offering the colleges some funds based on the number of students who complete a programme of study, with a premium for those who complete associate in arts degrees. This would offer a financial incentive to colleges to place more emphasis on completion and further emphasis still on numbers completing associate in arts degrees.

21. Finally there is a need for a range of specific access initiatives. We were impressed by what the community colleges and California State University, Long Beach were promoting for their localities. Such schemes need to be based on local needs. We believe that, for the most part, the design of outreach programmes is best left to institutions. There is, therefore, a case for institutions to be funded generally in a way which reflects success in widening access rather than through specific funds for outreach initiatives. This does not rule out some limited funds for specific initiatives, including their evaluation.

## **Findings: London**

### **Area Context**

22. London has been described as both a city of prosperity and a city of deprivation. The former London is wealthy, with easy access to the latest technology and knowledge, competing with the fast changing world of global business, and generating 15 percent of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product (GDP). The latter London is challenged in many ways, marked by discrimination and lack of access and choice, poor housing, poor schooling, high crime, poor health, lack of teachers, English language barriers, and diverse cultures, as nearly one-half of the United Kingdom's total ethnic minority population lives in London.<sup>1</sup> The city has 13 of England's 20 most deprived communities.

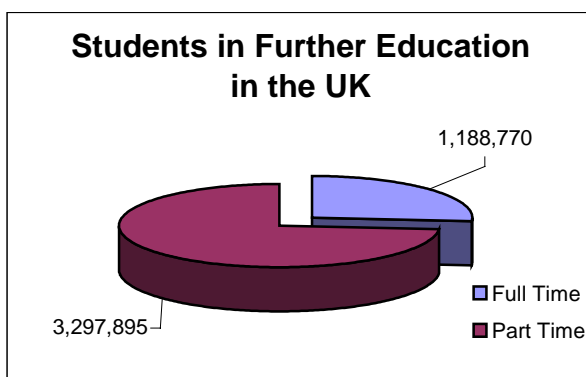
23. The localities targeted in this case study, North and East London, characterize the second London. They are areas of high unemployment (7.2 percent) and low-skills (one in four of the city's residents has no or minimal qualifications); most people see higher education as an unattainable goal. The two further education institutions reviewed, Barking College and Newham Sixth Form College, were situated within or

close to local areas with the lowest and second lowest English participation rates for higher education. Families are close-knit and do not want their children to go far away to college or to go to college at all. In both Londons, skills validated through qualifications exams are the key to social mobility.

24. In the United Kingdom, education and labor are connected through a system of ‘qualifications’. Competency-based qualifications – National Vocational Qualifications, or NVQs, in England – certify an individual’s ability to meet the skills standards required at work.<sup>2</sup> Skills are critical, yet over half of the young people in London have no qualifications.<sup>3</sup> More and more students with qualifications other than the traditional forms are entering higher education. In 1994-95, nearly 31 percent of the applicants to higher education who were admitted had non-traditional qualifications – access courses, foundation years, remedial skills courses, entrance interviews, the International Baccalaureate, the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) examinations, and other qualifications; that number had risen to 33.4 percent in 1998-99.<sup>4</sup>

25. At about age 16, students take General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations. Those who do not do well in exams or who do not take them at all are particularly at risk of not continuing in education beyond age 16.

26. School is compulsory to age 16; between ages 16 and 18, students may continue at school or enter further education institutions (including sixth form colleges) and many of those will prepare for higher education at age 18 or later through A-levels or equivalent vocational qualifications. Approximately 70 percent of the UK population stays in education after age 16 in sixth form schools or further education colleges.<sup>5</sup> Sixth form schools usually take the best students between ages 16 and 18 and help prepare them to enter a university. Further education colleges are open to these young people, but the majority of their students are adults or mature students studying part-time; these colleges offer academic, vocational, and professional qualifications. London has a long tradition of large numbers of part-time and mature or returning students; 50 percent of all higher education students are over 21 years old at enrollment and 30 percent are part-time.<sup>6</sup>



- Higher Education in London**
- 39 higher education institutions
  - 16 schools/colleges of the University of London
  - 12 colleges of higher education
  - 11 other universities
  - 27 further education colleges with some higher education
  - Over 250,000 students
  - £2,400 million investment

27. Students needing to improve their readiness for further or higher education may enroll in Access courses. Access courses are cornerstones in the nation’s efforts to increase access to higher education for under-represented groups and are offered mainly by sixth form and further education institutions.

## Access Strategies

28. *National policy to widen access.* The expansion of higher education opportunity has been more successful for some groups than for others. Trends in participation in higher education by social class between 1940 and 1995 illustrate uneven gains among the higher socio-economic groups (I-Professional, II-Intermediate, and III-Skilled Non-Manual) and the lower socio-economic groups (III-Skilled Manual, IV-Partly Skilled, and V-Unskilled). During that period, the higher groups increased participation rates from 8.4 percent to 46.6 percent, while the lower groups moved from 1.5 percent to 17.4 percent – a gain of 36 percentage points versus a gain of 16 percentage points.<sup>7</sup>

29. Under-representation by most minority ethnic groups is not a major issue. 'In 1994, 12.2 percent of the younger people in higher education were from minority ethnic groups; the same group represents 7.3 percent of the population as a whole. However, this figure disguises significant under-representation in a few particular subgroups such as Bangladeshi women and Afro-Caribbean men'.<sup>8</sup>

30. In 1998, the government offered guidance to the HEFCE, identifying access as a national priority and inviting the HEFCE to reflect this in its funding allocations to institutions. This was implemented through its Widening Participation initiative to (a) encourage universities to reach out, and (b) provide government funding to help institutions help students succeed once they are enrolled (see Clark, 2000). These approaches were allowed for in the higher education national budget in the last few years. The HEFCE program involves a competitive grant program with block grants, 95 percent of which are without strings; 5 percent premiums are paid to institutions that enroll low-income disadvantaged students (based on neighborhood postcodes), mature students, and part-time students. Also in recent years, additional funds to support more students have promoted expansion of the higher education sector; slots are distributed through a bidding process. HEFCE will allocate over 52,000 new student places in the 2000-01 academic year; approximately two-thirds will be for part-time students.<sup>9</sup> In 2000-01, the government provided £60 million for an additional 37,000 student places. That investment represented approximately 0.6 percent of the £4.38 billion appropriated for teaching and research in 2000-01.

31. *Funding.* Higher education institutions receive funding from many different public and private sources, but the HEFCE is the largest single source of income.<sup>10</sup> Funding for the Widening Participation initiative amounted to £118.5 million in 1999-2000; £63 million of that was for access. Additional funding was provided for 2001-02. In 2000-01, £25 million was allocated to broaden participation by under-represented groups. As noted above, in addition to base funding, the funding structure provides 'premiums' for subject-related factors, student factors, and institutional factors. Of importance to this study are the student factors. In recognition that there are extra costs associated with certain kinds of students, institutions receive a 5 percent premium for part-time students and a 5 percent premium for mature students (age 25 or over) during their first year. Another 5 percent goes for young undergraduate students from under-represented groups.

32. *Tuition fees and student support.* Tuition fees of £1,000 – about one-fourth of the average cost of tuition – were implemented in academic year 1998-99 and raised in line with inflation to £1,025 the following year. Fees are means tested, so students from poorer families are exempt, or pay only a

proportion.<sup>11</sup> Initial research suggests that tuition fees have not deterred potential students, as numbers of applicants in the first two years (1998-99 and 1999-2000) of the new funding plan have been very similar.<sup>12</sup> Between 1990 and 1999, student support (financial aid) comprised means-tested grants for maintenance (living costs); from last autumn, these grants become 'maintenance loans' for full-time students to help cover tuition fee costs. Repayment will be indexed to income upon graduation and repaid through the tax system, emphasizing the link with graduate salaries. An additional Hardship Loan of up to £250 is available for students with significant need, and, beginning this autumn, low-income part-time students may receive loans of at least £500.

### **Institutional Best Practice**

33. The five institutions visited for this study – Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London; Barking College (a further education institution); the University of East London; Newham Sixth Form College; and the University of North London – represent the broad spectrum of access routes for both young and mature students and provided a glimpse into how they are implementing the national policy agenda. Although these routes are very different from the American process, there are several points of comparison for institutional practices.<sup>13</sup>

34. *Institutional mission.* The institutional mission statement provides an initial indicator of commitment to widening access for under-represented groups. For the universities, in particular, these illustrate if and how widening access relates to their research mission.

University of East London: 'The University aspires to take the lead in the education, training, knowledge generation and knowledge transference of its region, so that it develops both a national and international reputation of innovation in access, widening participation and regeneration...'

Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London: 'To position ourselves across a range of measures of research performance, in the top decile of UK universities; to achieve and sustain a reputation for teaching excellence and innovation that ensures a buoyant student intake in both quality and quantity; to develop and sustain a corporate image which reflects the quality of the research, teaching, facilities and environment of the College; to support the above through efficient, cost-effective administrative structures.'

University of North London: 'To provide the best possible educational experience leading to a range of employment, social and economic opportunities for the widest possible clientele. This mission comprises four key elements. *Access to Opportunity* – to open up life long learning opportunities in an institution which values diversity and provides an educational experience which supports the development of self-reliant, capable graduates and postgraduates, equipped to succeed in and contribute to the economic, social, technological, cultural and political world. *Quality* – to provide for all students an educational experience which adds value to their capabilities, skills and qualifications and to deliver a high quality service and provision across the full range of the University's activities.' *Regional Development* and *Internationalism* are the other two elements.

35. It appears that research and reach-out are not necessarily unique to specific kinds of institutions but must co-exist within the mission of some universities. The United Kingdom, like the United States, continues to deal with the question of what level of performance in achieving access goals should the nation expect of research institutions. Should institutions that aspire to be research universities (or who want to maintain their status as research institutions) be expected to carry the load for strengthening access? Comments made during case study interviews reflected the ongoing institutional struggle with competing concerns of (a) meeting the needs of their local communities in which they are deeply rooted and (b) being drawn toward strengthening and developing their research function with the additional funding that it brings to the campus.<sup>14</sup>

36. *Collaboration.* Public policy emphasizes the universities' role in reaching out to under-represented students, yet these are the students least likely to be well prepared or positioned to respond to these efforts. To ameliorate this, cooperative initiatives between higher education institutions on the one hand, and further education colleges and sixth form colleges on the other, are critical. The institutions in this case study provided good examples of collaboration. Articulation is fostered, for example, by the kinds of local agreements seen at the University of East London and the University of North London with local further education institutions and other institutions that guarantee an interview and possibly a slot if a student successfully completes access courses. In another initiative – 'Opening Doors: The Gateway to Higher Education' – the University of East London, Barking College (a further education college), and other institutions established a Regional Advisory Network to develop the partnership and implement project activities.

37. *Student services and community-based initiatives.* Provision of special services such as mentoring and counselling should be integral parts of an access and retention strategy when the commitment is made to recruit under-prepared, first-generation and mature students. It appeared that universities are relative newcomers at providing these services for the Widening Participation population. The University of East London has recently developed 'New Beginnings' – a program of educational assessment to determine individual students' needs; community-based activity also includes advice and guidance counselling. The University of North London's Centre for Higher Education and Access Development appeared to provide a range of support services for students, but one interviewee questioned whether these optional services could continue. NewVIc (Newham Sixth Form College) had a well-developed array of services that included a tutoring program, skills center, and counselling service. Cognizant of the value of these services, the principal at this institution voiced concern that universities do not understand the importance of student support and they need better guidance for students. Can post-secondary institutions keep up with the potential increase in demand that will come with the access initiative?

38. Community-based centers are another way to reach out and serve students, most particularly the mature population. Barking College's learning centers, located in a football club and other localities convenient to large groups of the population, were good examples of institutional best practice.

39. *Use of funds for access.* The institutions in this case study see the financial support for access, both block grants and premiums, as supplementary to existing and ongoing commitments to access. When asked whether premium funds change the way the institution operates or support the operations in place, all responded with the latter – the funds help them do a better job of widening access. They are already engaged in access and dedicating other funding to this; the HEFCE initiative is supportive and is a

recognition that these students are more costly to work with. As one individual observed, 'the process is evolutionary, not revolutionary'.

### **Assessment of Effectiveness of Access Strategies**

40. While the case visits were brief and generally allowed only two hours on a campus, they enabled a good understanding of the strong points of the access initiative in some parts of London. Additionally, conversations with institutional and national leaders provided insights on areas of concern. Major issues that emerged from our discussions are outlined below.

41. *Pre-university conditions: readiness and social context.* Institutional representatives commented on students' inadequate academic preparation for higher education and the poor quality of many secondary schools. This is of particular concern given the national drive to enroll greater numbers of students from poor areas in higher education. The growth in the number and importance of access courses and foundation programs are evidence of increasing reliance on these strategies to help under-prepared students of all ages to remedy academic deficiencies. The often-mentioned problem with retention is another indication that academic readiness may be weak. A cohort study of 18- and 19-year-olds in 1992-93 revealed that one-half of the students from the higher socio-economic groups achieved two A-levels or equivalent and 77 percent of the cohort entered higher education. In contrast, only 16 percent of the cohort in the lower socio-economic groups achieved these A-levels, and less than half (47 percent) of them entered higher education with two A-levels or equivalent.<sup>15</sup>

42. To what extent can higher education assist secondary education in strengthening academic preparation? While certain universities and other institutions appear to have some initiatives to bring older school children to the campus through summer school activities, these are very limited in scope and size. The Department for Education and Employment is considering a new effort similar to the federal GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) project in the United States. This approach should strengthen linkages among secondary and higher education, and provide a comprehensive platform of integrated activities to better serve lower socio-economic groups.

43. Another pre-university issue that limits higher education participation is cultural values. Several institutional representatives stated that a large proportion of their constituents believed that higher education was not for them. Additionally, further education courses were seen as the end of educational opportunity for Muslim women. While some of these comments are based in sensitive cultural values that education may or may not wish to engage, other comments are based in a lack of understanding and appreciation for the value of higher education that is common among lower socio-economic groups. Such groups would benefit enormously from the collaborative, youth-centered, GEAR-UP-type outreach programs. For mature students, other kinds of approaches that are community-based – such as Barking's Learning Centers – or joint projects with business and industry are important for access goals. The government's support for an array of initiatives is commendable and should be expanded. Higher education institutions then also have the responsibility of making concerted efforts to collaborate with the community.

44. *Student Support.* Until recently, the UK Government provided full tuition reimbursement from public funds – arguably one of the most generous student support systems in the world. The present approach

is means-tested tuition fees; the previous means-tested grant for living costs was replaced with a partially means-tested loan. Current public policy changes and other conditions raise much uncertainty about financial access for low-income students: tuition fees are at £1,025; support that had been in the form of grants will now become loans; and there is very real worry about indebtedness, especially among many ethnic minority groups – a telling example is that Muslim women cannot enter marriage with debt. One of the unanswered questions in the United Kingdom's higher education community is whether the move from grants to loans will have a negative effect on participation rates of low-income students and mature students. While the impact of the policy shift from grants to 'maintenance loans' is not clear, indications from campus visits are that it may already be keeping students away. 'Recent evidence suggests that the imposition of tuition fees and the withdrawal of the maintenance grant are deterring mature students from entering full-time degree programs and that this is having a consequent effect on recruitment onto Access programs designed to prepare them primarily for full-time study'.<sup>16</sup> Also, as noted by Clarke (2000), would the number of applicants have been higher had the system not shifted from grants to loans? One university administrator observed that the fee structure is not necessarily the problem with 70 percent of the students working part-time, but the maintenance loan is a deterrent at point of entry, particularly for mature students. Another question raised during the site visits was whether the loan system favors the middle class. While loan repayment is indexed to earnings upon graduation, poorer students who complete programs below degree level will also have lower immediate earnings potential. Retention is a significant problem among mature students; there is widespread concern that loans will exacerbate this problem.

45. There are several questions surrounding the impact of tuition fees and the student support framework on under-represented students and the relationships between fees and support. All will require comprehensive data and analysis to answer and to inform policy decisions. HEFCE and the DfEE, in concert with data-gathering agencies and the institutions, should design a broad-based research program to examine those questions.

46. *Funding.* As one interviewee commented, the only way the government can influence institutions in the United Kingdom is through funding. The Widening Participation initiative injected additional resources into higher education institutions, yet criticisms that the funding is short-term and insufficient are pervasive. Stability of funding is a major issue. Institutions consistently complained that their funding varied from year to year, making it very difficult to plan ahead, dedicate resources to projects for more than one year, and anticipate or encourage new projects. Institutions should continue to press the HEFCE and the government about this issue and perhaps explore alternative funding strategies.

47. In addition to stable funding, many interviewees questioned the program's restriction on use of funds for enrolled students only; apparently, this is a misperception that needs to be corrected. More aggressive and targeted recruitment and outreach activities to attract students would help widen access. Additionally, expanding to year-round activities by encouraging more extensive use of campuses during the summer months for outreach programs for both young and mature students would address access goals while increasing utilization of facilities.

48. *Evaluation of effectiveness of access initiatives.* The newness of the government's access initiatives make it difficult to assess their effectiveness in addressing national goals to widen participation among under-represented populations. HEFCE has appointed an Action on Access Committee of practitioners to

look at the disparities among institutions in performance. Another plan to evaluate these policies is a project to produce national statistics tracking the progression of students from access courses to higher education.<sup>17</sup> Information gaps may exist, however, relative to students who use the further education and sixth form college route into higher education. For example, there does not appear to be a feedback mechanism in place for these institutions to receive information from universities on the performance of their students. As HEFCE and the DfEE develop evaluation designs, they will have the opportunity to examine the kinds of information needed and how it is collected, including the accuracy of postcodes to identify eligible students.

49. It is also important to evaluate the effectiveness of individual activities and the interaction of initiatives. As one person observed, the government has put many things in place for disadvantaged populations, but it is a maze of programs. The desire for a range of options to widen access may need to be better balanced against the value of continuity and articulation among efforts. In addition to fostering entry to post-secondary education, the initiatives should support student progression. With the increasing numbers of part-time and mature students enrolling in higher education and a national effort to expand that enrollment by providing Access and Foundation courses, close and efficient articulation is essential to create the transparent or seamless movement of students.

50. It is, perhaps, the lack of adequate progression measures that has prompted this kind of criticism of the government's access policy: 'One of the key strategies of the Government's plans to widen participation is to expand the numbers taking HND (Higher National Diploma) courses in local further education colleges. With only two years' study involved, they are correspondingly cheaper in subsistence terms than a degree course. However, the evidence is that those with HND qualifications earn less and have fewer job opportunities...Is this the route down which low-income groups are being steered?'<sup>18</sup> While the HND offers an intermediate point for students who want to enter employment after two years, its popularity has been declining. The government has proposed a new two-year foundation degree which would have a vocational emphasis and which would offer credit for a subsequent degree course. It will be important to avoid some of the pitfalls of the American associate degree path. Research has shown that under-represented minority groups in the United States who begin in the community college in a two-year transfer degree program too often do not continue on to complete the baccalaureate degree.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Interview with David Cormican, Regional Consultant, HEFCE, July 14, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> *Education and Training in Britain*, (ND), p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with David Cormican, op.cit.

<sup>4</sup> Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom, *Briefing Note: Widening Participation*, Summer 1999, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Education and Training in Britain*, (ND), p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with David Cormican, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, Anthony, *Widening Access into UK Higher Education*, September 2000, Annex A, Table 1 (London: Higher Education Funding Council for England and The British Council).

<sup>8</sup> Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, op. cit., p.2.

<sup>9</sup> 'Widening access and employability given priority in allocating 52,000 new student places', 5 July 2000, press release from HEFCE. Available at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/News/hefce/2000/wide.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Higher Education Funding Council for England, *A guide to funding higher education in England*, 1998, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

<sup>12</sup> Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, op. cit., p.4.

<sup>13</sup> For a more comprehensive source on institutional examples of good practice in widening access, see Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, *From Elitism to Inclusion*, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> As Tony Clark observed, 'It is primarily for individual institutions to determine their own missions. The government's policy is that all institutions should play a part in widening access but in a way which is consistent with their missions. There is a range of diverse institutions with some concentrating on research and drawing on the most able students across the country and others focusing on serving local or regional needs. There is no central planning of these arrangements. Decisions taken by the HEFCE, for example on the allocation of additional places, may influence plans for individual institutions. The competition for research funds through HEFCE's Research Assessment Exercise inevitably influences institutional behavior and arguably distorts priorities. The HEFCE has been reviewing the future of the Research Assessment Exercise and has announced alongside that further emphasis on developing a new stream of funds to encourage institutions to reach out into business and the community. Nevertheless, institutions will continue to face competing and conflicting pressures between research and reach out activity.'

<sup>15</sup> Clark, op. cit., Annex A, Table 3.

<sup>16</sup> 'Access Kitemarks and Quality', Autumn 1999, *Update on Inclusion*, (2), p.19.

<sup>17</sup> Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, op. cit., p.5.

<sup>18</sup> 'Changes in student funding: The implications for low income groups', Spring 1999, *Update on Inclusion*, (1), pp.9-10.