**College Tuition & Campus Luxuries**

**Segment Length: 5:17 minutes**

**Lesson Description:**

Why have colleges gotten so expensive? Has the money gone to improve education? Has the government forsaken our children? This segment looks at the rising cost of a college education.

**Vocabulary:**

Conundrum—(noun) a puzzling question or problem

Entice—(verb) lure by offering something desirable

Irony—(noun) intentionally using words to display a contradiction or incongruity between what is expected and what happens

Progressive—(noun) adherent of a political philosophy that looks to the government for

solutions to myriad social, economic, and political problems

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

• explain how policies that are enacted with good intentions can have unintended, negative consequences.

• develop arguments for and against spending college funds on luxury recreation centers, expensive dorms, and lobster dinners.

• evaluate the arguments for and against campus luxuries.

• assess the impact of college spending on campus luxuries.

**Preview Activity and Questions:**

Ask students: Do you plan to go to college? Why or why not? Is cost a factor? Is the earnings potential of a college graduate versus a high school graduate a factor in your decision? How much would you pay for a college degree? What is the product that a college sells?

**OR**

Ask students: If your favorite fast food restaurant added nice couches, TVs, and a pool, would you still go there? What would you expect to happen to the cost of eating there? Why? What if the government helped pay for your food at that eatery? What would you expect to happen to the price? Why?

**Viewing Guide:**

It is recommended that teachers show the video segment twice: once to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

**Reflections**

What are your initial reactions to the video segment you just watched? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What features would you take into consideration when choosing which college you were going to attend? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion and Analysis:**

1. John Stossel suggests that government can’t make college affordable for everyone. Why not?

2. Why do colleges charge what they charge? What are some reasons for the differences in tuition costs among colleges?

3. It is said that subsidies distort markets. What is being subsidized in the video? What is the market? How might subsidies distort the market?

4. Tamara Draut of Demos said, “Colleges have been forced to really cut to the bone.” What does she mean by “cut to the bone”? If colleges have really had to make cuts, how are they building fancy recreation centers?

5. What kind and how much research do you think went into finding out the colleges that

have rock walls?

6. Is there really anything wrong with colleges having rock walls and expensive recreation centers? Why or why not?

7. What effect are subsidies likely to have on demand, or in economics terms, how do

subsidies shift the demand curve?

8. What role might students play in the decision by colleges to build expensive recreation centers?

9. In the video, John Stossel said that “One place your money goes is to luxuries that entice students and their money.” Why do pools and fancy recreation centers entice students? If the main purpose of going to college is to get an education, why isn’t the quality of the education what entices students?

10. When John Stossel says *irony*, he attempts to point out contradictory statements by the president. What are those contradictory statements? Why are they contradictory?

11. Many college leaders say that government aid does not lead to tuition increases. How might their position be self-serving?

12. There are often unintended consequences to government actions. What unintended

consequences might come about as a result of government aid to college students?

13. Where does the government get the money it provides to many college students?

14. What is the point of the video? What is John Stossel advocating? What is he not advocating?

**Discuss These Lines from the Video:**

1. Today, almost half of college students get federal aid.

2. We’ve got to make sure that education is affordable and available to everybody who wants to go.

3. People are looking to the government to help them out of this mess. But the government got them into this mess.

4. Colleges know that they can keep increasing the cost, because the government says we will keep paying for it.

5. There’s no evidence that college loans or any type of student aid increases tuition at public universities.

6. Today students get an average $12,000 in federal and state aid, up from $7,000 in 1987.

7. ... what’s important to any red blooded American college student? Spring break. Give our [students] spring break every time they step in to the student recreation complex.

8. We are putting colleges on notice... we can’t just keep on subsidizing skyrocketing tuition.

**Quotes for Discussion:**

*Students often approached me about state-paid tuition while I was out campaigning. After I explained to them that if the state pays their tuition now, they will pay higher taxes to pay other people’s tuition for the rest of their lives, most of them ended up agreeing with me.* **— Jesse Ventura**

*It makes no difference how low tuition is if the student has no source of funds to pay that tuition.* **— James E. Rogers**

*If we choose to keep those tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, if we choose to keep a tax break for corporate jet owners, if we choose to keep tax breaks for oil and gas companies that are making hundreds of billions of dollars, then that means we’ve got to cut some kids off from getting a college scholarship.* **— Barack Obama**

*If anything, increases in financial aid in recent years have enabled colleges and universities to blithely raise their tuitions, confident that Federal loan subsidies would help cushion the increase.***—William Bennett**

*Borrowing to pay for college used to be the exception; now it’s the rule.***— Arne Duncan**

**Activities:**

Print and distribute the article “Saddle Me With Debt” by Harry Brodsky, a high school

student. First, have students read and summarize the article. Then have them explain his point of view. In the last part of the writing component, students should take a position, either agreeing or disagreeing with Mr. Brodsky’s point of view, and support that position using the information from the article. If this assignment is given as a homework, the next day, you can hold a class discussion on the article or divide students into two groups and conduct a classroom debate.

http://www.nypost.com/p/opedcolumnists/saddle\_me\_with\_debt\_R4H5CWLV3Xwv2snqwUHwLJ

Use the Internet to research college costs. Select three colleges in your state: a state school, a community college, and a private college. Report on the tuition at those three schools.

How different are the schools? Their facilities? Their tuition? Their enrollment? What other features are similar or different?

Research federal aid to students attending college? What federal government programs give tuition assistance to college students? How many students receive aid through this program? How much money does the program cost each year? How much money does a typical recipient get?

Develop a timeline of federal laws that have been enacted in the past 10 years that were designed to help students go to college.

Use the Internet to research ratings on college affordability. Report your findings to the class.

Have the students work in groups to conduct a classroom debate over the issue college costs and campus luxuries.

Research the Bennett Hypothesis. What is it? What information is used to support that theory? What information is used to refute it?

Write a letter to a college president, explaining *your* college selection criteria.

In a five-paragraph persuasive essay, argue in favor of or against college luxuries. Make sure to include your thesis statement in your introduction, and in one of your body

paragraphs, explore the opposition’s argument and the reasons you think they are wrong.

Read “25 Ways to Reduce the Cost of College.” Then, select five to seven proposals you think will work best, and present them to the class. Be sure to explain why you think the proposals you selected will work.

http://centerforcollegeaffordability.org/25-ways/full-report

Read “Making College More Expensive: The Unintended Consequences of Federal Tuition Aid” by Gary Wolfram. Summarize the article, and then analyze the argument(s) the writer makes.

http://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa531.pdf

Read “Rich College Presidents, Strapped Students” by Thomas Hedges. Summarize the article, and then analyze the argument(s) the writer makes.

http://www.demos.org/blog/rich-college-presidents-strapped-students

Read one of the books in the resources list below, and write a book report about it.

Create a political cartoon about the cost of college or the amenities colleges offer students.

Create a print, slideshow, or media advertisement to recruit students for your school. While working on this assignment, you will have to determine which features of the school would serve as incentives for potential students. Present your ad to the class, and explain why you selected to focus on the features you included in the ad.