



Justice Talking Listening Guide

College Admissions: A Game of Privilege?

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The college admissions process has changed significantly in recent years, particularly for students seeking to get into the nation's most elite universities. Should these schools' admissions policies favor athletes and children of alumni? Should low-income and minority students be a priority? Or should top schools only enroll the smartest and most academically accomplished? We also talk about the obstacles and misconceptions facing students who attend community college. On this edition of Justice Talking we ask how money and privilege affect the college admissions process and whether reforms are necessary.



Peter Schmidt

- Part 1: Seventeen-year-old Joshua Adams wants to go to college. To do so, he has sought the help of **Paul Griffin**, founder of a group called City at Peace.

- Part 2: Margot talks with senior writer at The Chronicle of Higher Education, **Peter Schmidt**, about college demographics and how financial aid affects enrollment.



Ross Weiner

- Part 3: Justice Talking contributor Amy Mayer reports on a new effort by Amherst College to help students by doing away with loans and offering grants from the college's own resources.

- Part 4: Margot is joined by **Ross Weiner** of The Education Trust and **Peter McPherson** of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges to discuss how universities can improve access for low-income students.



Peter McPherson

- Part 5: Margot interviews **Stacy Dale**, a researcher at Mathematica Policy, about a study she co-authored on whether attending an elite university affects a student's future earnings.



Thomas Bailey

- Part 6: Margot talks with Columbia University Teachers College professor **Thomas Bailey** about the importance of community colleges.

- Part 7: Justice Talking producer Viet Le talks with students from LaGuardia Community College in New York City.



Some Top Students Look for Hidden-Gem Colleges

Admissions anxiety around a small group of highly selective colleges is more intense than ever. But there are still many students who have chosen not to get caught up in the frenzy. They are marching to a different drummer and choosing colleges with different profiles.

Listen here:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7384194>



Host Margot Adler

Margot Adler is a National Public Radio correspondent based in NPR's New York bureau. Adler has forty years of experience as a radio host and reporter and is the author of several books.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Affirmative Action – Affirmative action in the United States is an active effort to improve employment or educational opportunities for members of minority groups and for women. Affirmative action began as a government remedy to the effects of long-standing discrimination against such groups and has consisted of policies, programs, and procedures that give preferences to minorities and women in job hiring, admission to institutions of higher education, the awarding of government contracts, and other social benefits. The typical criteria for affirmative action are race, disability, gender, ethnic origin, and age. Today, many institutions use affirmative action policies in order to ensure a diverse workforce or school.

Affirmative action was initiated by the administration of President Lyndon Johnson (1963–69) in order to improve opportunities for African-Americans while civil rights legislation was dismantling the legal basis for discrimination. The federal government began to institute affirmative action policies under the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. Businesses receiving federal funds were prohibited from using aptitude tests and other criteria that tended to discriminate against African-Americans. Affirmative action was later broadened to cover women and Native Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities, and was extended to colleges and universities and state and federal agencies.

-Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com

Federal Pell Grant – The Federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants to low-income college students to promote access to higher education. Students may use their grants at any one of approximately 5,400 participating institutions. Grant amounts are dependent on the student's expected family contribution, the cost of attendance, the student's enrollment status, and whether the student attends for a full academic year or less. Financial need is determined by the U.S. Department of Education using a standard formula, established by Congress.

More information on the Pell Grant can be found on the U.S. Department of Education website at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html>.

From "amicus curiae" to "zoning," find definitions for legal terms in Justice Learning's Democracy Glossary at <http://services.justicetalking.org/dg/>.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe a diverse environment is an important factor in a college education? Why?
2. Guest Ross Weiner says the way we define "merit" should be changed. How do you think it could be changed to be more inclusive of low-income and minority students?

The New York Times
LearningNetwork

The College Dropout Boom: Almost one in three Americans in their mid-20s now fall into the category of college dropout, up from one in five in the late 1960s. Most come from poor and working-class families.

Read this New York Times Learning Network article here:

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20050525wednesday.html

