

ILLUMINATIONSSM

Highlighting important trends in postsecondary education access

THE ISSUE:

Today, more than ever, postsecondary education is vital to the nation's prosperity and the full participation of its people. Recent figures from the U.S. Census Bureau provide stark evidence of higher education's value: In 1999, the average annual income of a high school graduate was less than \$25,000; for someone with a four-year college degree, it was nearly \$46,000. Lifetime earnings of college graduates nearly double those of high school graduates, \$2.1 million to \$1.2 million.

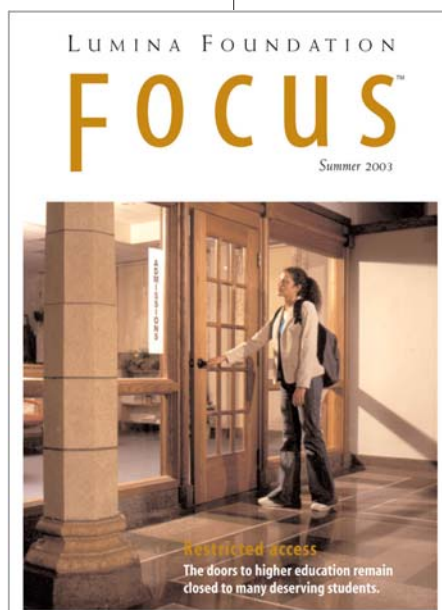
Unfortunately, tens of thousands of qualified students each year fail to cross the threshold into higher education. *Lumina Foundation Focus*TM, a new publication from Lumina Foundation for Education, examines the barriers that keep these students from reaching their potential.

The magazine's premier issue features "Restricted Access," a comprehensive article by noted higher education writer Alvin P. Sanoff. In that article, real-life students tell of their struggles, and several national experts share their insights on college access, one of the nation's most critical issues.

THE STUDENTS:

- **Roxanne Godding**, a sophomore at Bridgewater (Mass.) State College, took the economical route to higher education. Roxanne, who is studying to be a clinical scientist, was an excellent student at West Roxbury High School in Massachusetts and was accepted at a prestigious — and pricey — private college. Her father is deceased, and her mother lives on Social Security survivor payments, so Roxanne knew cost would be a major concern. The private school offered her a large grant but, with the annual cost of attendance exceeding \$37,000, Roxanne was facing at least \$40,000 in loan debt before earning her four-year degree. She decided the price was too high and opted instead for Bridgewater State, which offered her a tuition waiver and gave her a scholarship.

- **Jason Long**, a 20-year-old junior at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, is one of the lucky ones. He attended a public high school in a working-class section of South Portland, Maine, where he excelled academically. His parents encour-



The doors to higher education remain closed to many deserving students.

aged his college aspirations, but they had little money to contribute to his dream of attending Bowdoin, an elite liberal-arts college where the annual cost of attendance (\$38,000) would consume much of the Long family's annual income. Through a combination of Bowdoin grants (\$20,000), several academic scholarships, income from a campus job, and his parents' willingness to borrow \$3,000, Jason is making his dream come true.

- **Aaron Pennington**, a 21-year-old marketing major from Indianapolis, epitomizes the peripatetic life of today's college student. He's transferred twice, attending a four-year residential campus (Indiana State University), then a community college (Ivy Tech State College) before enrolling at the urban, state-supported, four-year "commuter college" he now attends (IUPUI). The high cost of college has always been a factor for Aaron, and he's worked throughout his postsecondary career. He now holds down a full-time, third-shift warehouse job while taking a full load of courses, many of them online.

THE TRENDS:

The experiences of these students are by no means isolated. In fact, hundreds of thousands of American students face similar barriers, and these barriers are particularly difficult for students who are traditionally underserved by higher education: low-income students, students of color and first-generation students. "Restricted Access" looks closely at these barriers, drawing on the knowledge of more than 20 national experts on higher education access. Among the issues and trends examined in this first issue of *Lumina Foundation Focus* are:

Lumina Foundation for Education, a private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access to an education beyond high school. Through research, grants for innovative programs and communication initiatives, Lumina Foundation addresses issues surrounding access and educational attainment — particularly among underserved student groups, including adult learners. The

There is no question that inadequate financial aid can limit postsecondary opportunity. When it comes to increasing access to higher education, there's not enough money. But money's not enough. Here are four other vital ingredients for a successful transition to college:

- Student motivation and aspiration.
- Rigorous academic preparation.
- Encouragement from family and peers.
- Information that aids the college-entry process.

- The significant and persistent gap in college-participation rates between the highest- and lowest-income students — a disparity that has endured for three decades.
- The increased use of merit-based aid by institutions and states, a strategy that often reduces the availability of need-based aid.
- Education loans and the concern about managing student loan debt.
- The important role played by the nation's community colleges — a role that presents both opportunities and challenges.
- The growth of the nation's Hispanic population, a huge demographic shift that will affect postsecondary education for decades.

THE CONSEQUENCES:

Each year, hundreds of thousands of academically qualified students fall through the cracks and never realize their college dreams.

Worse, the cracks are getting wider because college costs continue to rise and the number of at-risk students continues to increase as the nation's low-income and minority populations grow.

"Increasing access to higher education is vital to our future," says Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. "Yes, it's a complex issue, but it's one that we simply can't afford to ignore. If we do, this nation will be paying the price for a long, long time."

Read Lumina Foundation Focus

Copies of "Restricted Access," the premier issue of *Lumina Foundation Focus* magazine, are available in the "Publications" section of the Lumina Foundation Web site (www.luminafoundation.org). Free, printed copies are also available. To obtain a copy or to request any of the Foundation's printed material, please send an e-mail request to Lumina.Foundation@luminafoundation.org. If you'd like to be notified about other Lumina Foundation publications, go to the Web site and subscribe to our e-alerts. We'll send you an e-mail when a new publication is available.

Foundation bases its mission on the belief that postsecondary education remains one of the most beneficial investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people. For more details on the Foundation, visit its Web site at www.luminafoundation.org.