

Obama's two-year college plan is a good one

Clarence Page is absolutely correct when he asserts that "Community colleges may well be the key to our recovery" in his column in last Thursday's Daily News.

Indeed, without a renewed emphasis on education at all levels, any attempt to solve our economic problems in anything more than a superficial sense is doomed to failure.

The reality is that education constitutes the only way out of poverty for those in the lower socioeconomic classes. It is equally true that not everyone needs to attend a traditional four-year college or university. But the consensus is that almost everyone will need some education or training beyond the secondary level in order to maintain a decent standard of living in the future.

Community colleges are ideally poised to fill this unique role in sustaining our economic future. The more our legislators support these institutions, the better prepared we all will be to deal with the

immense challenges that lie ahead for our society. And unlike many initiatives whose efficacy is subject to perennial debate, any funding allocated to community colleges is inherently money well spent.

However, more money also demands greater accountability from those who are charged with translating resources into reality. Toward this end, higher education desperately needs to return to its primary mission of educating students instead of merely credentialing them.

Accreditation and academic standards are useful tools — but only as a general framework for the educational process.

Bureaucracy should never be allowed to interfere with genuine learning; the focus must always be on the needs of individual students.

There is no doubt in my mind that Clarence Page is absolutely right to promote Obama's proposed American Graduation Initiative, with its emphasis on community

colleges. Economically as well as philosophically, it's simply the right thing to do.

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