Sixteen Strategies for Widening Equity of Participation in Higher Education in the United States: Reflections from International Comparisons

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As Dr. Perna indicated in the previous essay the statistics shown in this report reveal that we have a national imperative to improve postsecondary educational opportunity equity both from a social justice perspective and from a national competitiveness perspective. In this essay I share 16 interconnected strategies that I think would be helpful for the 21st century context. I base my reflections both on my experience as an education statistical and evaluation researcher; and also as a "long ago 20th century first-generation, low-income student." This essay is informed by my participating in the project on *International Research on the Effectiveness of Widening Participation*.[31] The work, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE), was to prepare locally authored case studies on: Australia, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, and the United States to help inform the development of sound policy and practice for the English context. The Pell Institute was asked to prepare the U.S. case study following a standardized template and in the course of so-doing I reviewed a large body of literature on strategies for widening participation in the United States.[32]

Among the case study sites, Norway, Australia, Ireland, and the Netherlands have experienced greater levels of growth in postsecondary participation than in the U.S. in the last decade and Norway, Australia, and the Netherlands now have higher bachelor's attainment among 25-35 year olds than the U.S. After a decade of rapid growth Ireland's bachelor's attainment rates are now similar to the United States and the combined tertiary type A and B rates for Ireland now exceed those of the United States. Statistics on South Africa's bachelor's attainment are not reported but South Africa's gross (age-cohort) higher education participation rate was about 18 percent in 2010 with a target of 20 percent by 2014. College participation rates of secondary school graduates range from 38 percent for Africans to 63 percent for whites.

Before beginning, it should be noted that while selected examples are presented from each of the countries of strategies that I believe are positive, this does not imply a belief that one system or another is better or superior to the United States in terms of equity issues. A paramount conclusion from the summary of the independently prepared case studies was the fact that although the countries have very different education system histories and differing degrees of what might be called educational equity, they each struggled with similar postsecondary

31 Lindsey Bowes, Liz Thomas, Louise Peck, Tej Nathwani, *International Research on the Effectiveness of Widening Participation Report to HEFCE and OFFA* by CFE and Edge Hill University October 2013

32 Margaret Cahalan, *Widening Participation in Higher Education in the United States of America Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA*, October 2013, Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education

access, completion, and funding challenges. The case study site synthesis report also found that the individual county reports had identified many similar strategies for improvement applied in very diverse contexts.[33]

Sixteen Selected Strategies for Consideration

1. **Setting Place Based Achievable Targets and Providing the Means to Attain the Goals (National, State, Local, and Individual Levels)** Among the case study sites the counties showing marked gains in attainment and equity over the past two decades have done so after setting clear formal targets and addressing pathways to achieve the goals. For example, the Australia government has formal aspirational goals of reaching 40 percent bachelor's attainment of 25 to 34 year olds by 2025 (By 2012 they were at 37 percent). Australia also has a formal "proportional representational equity goal" of having 20 percent of enrolled students come from the lowest income quartile by 2020. Since the mid-2000s, the Netherlands has had an objective that by 2020,[34] 50 percent of the workforce aged 25–34 should have a higher education degree. It is argued that based on the ambition to become "a top-five leading knowledge economy, the Netherlands should seriously invest to increase participation, particularly by non-traditional underrepresented student groups, such as mature students, part-time students, associate degree students, professional master's students and ethnic minority students." [35] In the United States, President Obama has expressed attainment goals in terms of every citizen committing to some postsecondary education and in terms of returning the U.S. to be first in the international rankings by 2020.[36] This has prompted some increased national, state and local goal setting and monitoring. An example of which is illustrated by the *55 Thousand Degrees* initiative in Louisville Kentucky—a community project that yearly tracks college going in the city and seeks to increase the number of Louisville residents who hold college degrees by 55,000.[37] The evidence from the U.S. high school longitudinal studies is that US students from all social groups now have high aspirations for postsecondary education. For example, by 2002, at the start of the 21st century over 80 percent of high school students aspired to attain a bachelor's degree or higher and fully two-thirds (66 percent) of those in the lowest SES quartile so aspire.[38] It is less clear that the means to attain the goals are in place.

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33 While the traditional OECD countries studied may speak in terms of the "evolution" of their systems to be more open, equitable and universal, a country such as South Africa with a history of apartheid, with related institutionalized racism, marginalization and deprivation of a significant section of its society, has embraced the concept of "transformation" (involving both equity and redress) as its overarching policy imperative. Gerald Wangenge-Ouma, University of Pretoria, *Widening Participation in South African Higher Education* Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA October 2013

34 Trevor Gale and Stephen Parker, Deakin University, *Australia Widening Participation in Australian Higher Education Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA* October 2013 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessAus.pdf "

35 J.J. (Hans) Vossensteyn, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, *Widening Participation in Higher Education in the Netherlands* Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA October 2013 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessNeth.pdf

36 President Obama, Address to a Joint Session of Congress, February 24, 2009

37 *Greater Louisville's Education Scorecard 2014 Update*, 55 Thousand Degrees, http://www.55000degrees.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/55K_PR14_WhitePaper_Web.pdf

38 Cahalan, M, Ingles, S, Burns, L, Planty, M., (2006), *United States High School Sophomores: A Twenty-Two Year Comparison, 1980–2002*, Statistical Analysis Report, U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2006–327 http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006327.pdf

2. **Increasing the Reach, Funding, and Capacity of College Access Programs.** Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), a nationally representative sample of U.S. high school students in the 1990s, Horn and Chen found in correlational analysis that participation in any type of pre-college program doubled the odds for enrolment in a 4-year college after controlling for other factors known to be related to college entrance.[39] There is also a growing considerable body of evidence from evaluation studies that these programs do make a significant difference, and are often the deciding factor in college access and success for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities. Despite this evidence, these programs have seen level funding and de facto decreases in level of resources over the past 15 years. With regard to the federal programs, estimates are that Talent Search and GEAR Up taken together reach about 7 to 10 percent of eligible students, and the more intensive programs such as Upward Bound (UB) and Upward Bound Math Science (UBMS) reach about 2 percent of eligible low-income, first generation students. The programs sponsored by the federal government mentioned above, and private supported programs such as AVID, Project GRAD, and Talent Development have had evaluations that have provided evidence of their effectiveness, with the more intensive programs showing larger effect sizes.[40] For example, the random assignment evaluation of Upward Bound found that participation in UB, the most intensive of the Federal pre-college programs, resulted in a 50 percent higher BA attainment rate in 6 years among low income and first generation students who were randomly assigned in middle school or early high school to Upward Bound and who entered the program. A synthesis of work published by the Department of Education reported that the most effective strategies within these programs are: 1) encouraging and supporting strong academic course taking preparation for college; 2) using data to assist students in planning; 3) surrounding students with strong support mentors and peers supporting college attendance; 4) helping students engage in the practical steps to college (course completion, application for aid, college visits, applications); and 5) increased financial literacy and aid awareness[41].

3. **Focus on Retention and Completion and Increased Use of Student Support Services.** International comparisons from each of the six country sites indicate that whenever a higher educational system is expanding from elite to a more representational student population, the new students will be in greater need of academic support than students from the more socio-economically

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39 Horn, L. and Chen, X., (1998), *Toward Resiliency: At Risk Students Who Make It to College*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington D.C.

40 Constantine J.M, Seftor N.S., Martin E.S., Silva T and Myers D, *A Study of the Effect of Talent Search on Secondary and Postsecondary Outcomes in Florida, Indiana, and Texas*, US Department of Education, 2006; Cahalan, M., *The National Evaluation of Talent Search, The Implementation of the Federal Talent Search Program: Past and Present*, U.S. Department of Education, 2003 ; ;Olsen, R, Seftor N, Silva T, Myers D, DesRoches D, and Young J, *Upward Bound Math Science: Program Description and Interim Impact Estimates*, U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C., Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2007; Berry T., Sloper S. and Langan S., (2012), *Project GRAD Evaluation*, Project GRAD website; http://projectgrad.org/ ; Cahalan M, *Addressing Study Error in the Random Assignment National Evaluation of Upward Bound: Do the Conclusions Change?*; can be accessed http://www.pellinstitute.org/publications-Do_the_Conclusions_Change_2009.shtml ;Standing K., Judkins D., Keller B., and Shimshak A., *Early Effects of the GEAR UP Program*, report submitted to U.S. Department of Education, Policy and Program Studies Service, 2008; Kemple J., Herlihy C., Smith T., (2005), *Making Progress Toward Graduation Evidence from the Talent Development High School Model*, MDRC Talent Development Program Description http://www.mdrc.org/talent-development-high-school-model; Aspire, http://oregonstudentaid.gov/aspire.aspx ;*AVID Senior Data Collection. Study of 33,204 AVID Seniors* (2011-2012). U.S. Overall. AVID Program Description http://www.avid.org/

41 Tierney, W.G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N. & Hurd, N.F., (2009), *Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do: A Practice Guide*, (NCEE #2009-4066), Washington D.C., National Center for Education Evaluation

advantaged families.[42] In the United States, participation in Student Support Services programs has been found to increase college completion rates significantly in national studies based on propensity matching of students with similar entering entrance characteristics.[43] A recent U.S. Department of Education publication identified specific strategies found to be effective in increasing college retention and completion. Services should be: 1) integrated — building and reinforcing each other; 2) sustained — one semester is not considered enough; and 3) systematic — having an overall plan and promoting a culture of success.[44] Specific strategies that have evidence of effectiveness from recent research in the U.S. context include: 1) direct efforts to reduce the need for remediation in the first year of college, including "upward placement" strategies with support and summer bridge programs for entering freshman especially those targeted to specific upcoming freshman courses or those designed to avoid remediation; 2) proactive or intrusive, advising of students that may be at risk and possibly involving college coaches calling or contacting students each week, working with students ahead of time before failure happens to plan strategies to deal with challenges, and specific contracts with students; 3) creating structured pathways to success for students that are clear and attainable and providing data and information to support the pathways; and 4) engaging faculty in creating a culture of fostering student success. In addition, correlational studies that use aggregate completion rates relative to the characteristic of entering students consistently find that colleges with a mission or particular historical focus (for example, Historically Black Colleges or Catholic Colleges) generally have higher than expected completion rates given the characteristics of entering students.[45]

4. **Supporting Competency-Mastery Based Learning and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for Admissions and for College Credit toward Program Completion.** The goal of universal postsecondary education, will mean that the face of postsecondary education itself may change with the growth of on-line programs, shorter certificate programs and competency based credentialing rather than credit-hour based credentialing. New structures to accommodate older students and students with diverse goals and learning styles hold promise.[46] For example, supported by Gates Foundation funding, the University of Southern New Hampshire has an experimental Associate's degree program that moves away from the traditional time-based credit hours model and instead allows students to demonstrate competency in 120 areas for the degree. The on-line program was recently given approval from the Department of Education as eligible for Federal Aid funds. Universal participation will mean changes not just in student decisions but also in market-driven institutional program development to meet diverse workforce and student needs. As alternative methods of learning grow the formal means for "Recognized Prior Learning (RPL)"become more important. For example, the South Africa report notes that through this process, "people's prior learning can be formally recognized in terms of registered qualifications and unit standards, regardless of where and

42 Lindsey Bowes, Liz Thomas, Louise Peck, Tej Nathwani, *International Research on the Effectiveness of Widening Participation Report to HEFCE and OFFA* by CFE and Edge Hill University October 2013

43 Channey B., Muraskin L., Cahalan M. & Rak R., (1997), *National Study of Student Support Services: Third-Year Longitudinal Study of Results and Program Implementation Study Update*, Washington D.C., U.S. Department of Education; Channey, B., (2008), National Study of Student Support Services: Six Year Longitudinal Study Results, Washington D.C., U.S. Department of Education

44 U.S. Department of Education, (2012), *Evidence Meets Practice: Institutional Strategies to Increase College Completion*, Available at http://www.edpubs.gov/document/ed005371p.pdf

45 Mortenson, T, *Actual versus Predicted Institutional Graduation Rates, Access and Completion*, White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Washington D.C., September 19, 2011

46 Leonardo Carrizo for The Chronicle (http://chronicle.com/article/The-Gates-Effect/140323/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en).

how the learning was attained. RPL acknowledges that people never stop learning, whether it takes place formally at an educational institution, or whether it happens informally." It facilitates access and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths and accelerates redress of past unfair discrimination in education and training opportunities." [47] Globally, Massive Open, Online Courses (MOOCs)s also have the potential to radically change the access to bodies of knowledge.[48]

5. **Cohort Services and Special Focus on Key Transition Points for Students That May be Tipping Points; Listening to What Students Are Telling Us.** The recent "policy conversation" around college access has stressed the need to provide "whole school" services to all students and not only to those traditionally served who volunteer for the program and are already interested. There is also recognition of the importance of services keyed to transition points such as entrance from middle to high school with focus on 9th grade services and summer bridge programs between 8th and 9th grade. Another transition point is that of the 12th graders in the college application period; helping students make the right choices for them is deemed important. Similarly programs such as summer bridge programs for entering college freshman, especially those that will need special services, are deemed as very important. A summer bridge program can sometimes reduce the need for remedial courses and also give students a leg up on being successful in that first year of college which for many is a stumbling block. Students who experience early success in high school or college are more likely to persist and complete.

6. **Restoring Public Funding at the Federal, State, and Local levels to Earlier Levels Including Restoring Pell Grants to Their Former Buying Power.** All of the countries in the case studies reported debates and struggles with issues of continued funding of postsecondary education, but those country's leading the world in increases in college completion have each made strong financial commitments to invest in higher education in ways that provide students with relatively high levels of the financial and student support services needed. For example public institutions attended by 85 percent of students in Norway do not charge tuition, and the government policy is that all students are provided with the means to attend including funds to live separately from their parents.[49]

7. **Universal Free Tuition for Community College and First Two Years of 4-Year College.** A number of proposals and plans have been made for variations of this option some of which include only community colleges and others of which would also include support for first two years regardless of

47 Gerald Wangenge-Ouma, University of Pretoria, *Widening Participation in South African Higher Education Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA*, October 2013 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessSAfrica.pdf

48 *Bill Gates Discusses MOOCs at Microsoft Research's Faculty Summit, Chronicle of Higher Education Blog* http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/bill-gates-discusses-moocs-at-microsoft-researchs-faculty-summit/44809?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en A blog entry from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* summarized remarks from Bill Gates, in a keynote address to the July 2013 Microsoft Research Faculty conference called these times a "golden era" of learning, thanks to MOOCs and easy access to information. In addressing the current discussion over the value of a college degree, he also predicted a "decoupling" of the degree from knowledge acquisition. Traditionally, a college degree was a badge indicating skills in certain areas that could be translated to employment. Mr. Gates said that may no longer be the case, largely because of online education. This will be "a global phenomenon," he said. "We're on the beginning of something very profound

49 Elisabeth Hovdhaugen, Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) *Widening Participation in Norwegian Higher Education Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA*, October 2013, http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessNorway.pdf

type of college attended (2-year or 4-year).[50] Some states such as California had free tuition in previous decades over 50 years ago. In the more recent context states such as Tennessee have developed a plan for free 2-year community college attendance and President Obama recently announced his national plan for free community college at Pellissippi State Community college in Tennessee.[51]

8. **Place Based Local Scholarship and Support Programs for All Students within a City with Partnerships with Local Colleges and Universities.** Projects such as the *Kalamazoo Promise* in Michigan and the *Denver Scholarship Foundation* (DSF) in Colorado provide model examples of projects that award full or sizable scholarships combined with support services to students who attend the local high schools for 4 years and attend colleges in the state or local region. Partnerships are in place with colleges in the local area to provide support services.[52]

9. **Incentivizing Completion through Conversion of Loans to Grants upon Completion of Course or Program of Study.** While countries varied in the extent to which loans were used to cover college costs depending on the funding structure and levels of grant awards available, all of the case study sites utilized some form of loans to students. In countries in which tuition and fees are covered in basic and means tested grants, loans might only be used for additional support expenses. However, often these loans are changed to grants upon successful course or program completion. For example, in South Africa, the responsible government agency, NSFAS, makes awards that are 100 percent loans; however, afterwards up to 40 percent of the loan is converted into a bursary (grant) depending on the student's academic results. To encourage students to complete their studies on time, beginning in 2011, all students registered at a public university in their final year of study and who qualified for funding from NSFAS would receive a loan equivalent to the full cost of study. The entire loan is converted into a bursary if the students passed all their courses and graduate in the year of offer. Failure to graduate meant that the award remains a loan to be repaid to NSFAS.[53] In the Netherlands model which has government paid full tuition, financial assistance consists of an allowance towards expenses such as living costs, books and study materials, tuition fees, and travel. Student financial assistance includes a basic grant, a supplementary grant and an interest-bearing loan. The basic grant and supplementary grant are now initially paid out in the form of a loan. If the student graduates within 10 years, the loan is converted into a non-repayable grant. Therefore these grant parts are called performance-related grants. Students receive performance-related grants for the nominal duration of their study program and may take up a loan until 36 months after the nominal duration of their program. Grants are intended as a means of keeping higher education broadly accessible and are paid monthly.[54]

50 Sara Goldrick-Rab and Nancy Kendall, Redefining *College Affordability: Securing America's Future with a Free Two Year College Option* The Education Optimists, April 2014. http://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/ideas_summit/Redefining_College_Affordability.pdf

51 http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2015/01/09/obama-two-years-of-college-would-be-as-free-and-universal-as-high-school/; http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/writers/pat_schneider/community-college-education-should-be-free-to-students-says-uw/article_80322846-950a-11e3-806f-001a4bcf887a.html

52 http://www.denverscholarship.org/ and https://www.kalamazoopromise.com/

53 Gerald Wangenge-Ouma, University of Pretoria, *Widening Participation in South African Higher Education Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA* October 2013 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessSAfrica.pdf

54 J.J. (Hans) Vossensteyn, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, *Widening Participation in Higher Education in the Netherlands* Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA, October 2013 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessNeth.pdf

10. **Addressing the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Issues through Prevention and Flexibility Rewarding Improvement**. Pell grants, as most college support grants in the case study sites, have long had performance related academic requirements. However, unlike the trend in some countries to have more flexible performance goals that recognize that underprepared, disadvantaged and working students may need more time, in recent years stricter regulations for completion time have been implemented in the United States. This has led to a complex hard to administer requirement that to continue the Pell grant students must demonstrate on a yearly basis that they are progressing to their program completion within 150 percent of the program time. Recent research indicates that these more stringent requirements as applied may be impacting as many as 20 percent of Pell recipients who early on in college lose their Pell grants and leave college.[55] Students whose prior academic record, heavy work load, and other risk factors indicate that the student may enter college with a high probability of SAP failure can be identified prior to Pell award so that prevention actions such as summer bridge, structured first year, intrusive advising and early warning programs can be initiated. It's also important that students have adequate information concerning the SAP requirements as applied to their program of study before and not after they have lost their Pell grant. Programs like "Binding Study Advice" (BSA) such as exist in Netherlands and similar programs in South Africa that initiate requirements such as limits to work hours, and tutoring requirements to help students get back on track may be a better approach than the US regulation of removal of the Pell Grant.

11. **Increased Integration of Work and Learning**. International and U.S. research indicates that students who are more engaged and have career or learning goals for themselves tend to do better academically and are more likely to complete a program even controlling for entering academic characteristics. Studies also show that students who leave before completing often site problems in juggling work and college.[56] The Netherlands case study reported the observation that programs that are more structured and contain a component of work experience in the field of study have lower dropout rates than less focused programs among students with similar academic backgrounds.[57] Within the U.S., the Travelers Edge, program sponsored by the Travelers Insurance Company Foundation is an example of a model program that combines financial and academic support plus concrete work experience for students interested in careers in insurance, including finance, claims, underwriting, information technology, and engineering.[58]

12. **Increased Support for Full-Time College Attendance and Reduced Work-Loads for Students**. Research has repeatedly shown that part-time attendance is a risk factor in the U.S. in terms of college completion and as noted, studies of students leaving college site the difficulty in juggling

55 *Pell Grants as Performance-Based Aid? An Examination of Satisfactory Academic Progress Requirements in the Nation's Largest Need-Based Aid Program* A CAPSEE Working Paper Lauren Schudde Judith Scott-Clayton Community College Research Center Teachers College, Columbia University December 2014; Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, (2010) The Rising Price of Inequality. Washington, DC. Retrieved on October 29, 2011 from http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acsfa/acsfarpijune2010.pdf

56 Perna, L.W., ed., (2010), *Understanding the Working College Student: New Research and Its Implications for Policy and Practice*, Sterling, Va., Stylus; With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them; http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/with-their-whole-lives-ahead-of-them-reality-1

57 J.J. (Hans) Vossensteyn, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, *Widening Participation in Higher Education in the Netherlands Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA*, October 2013

58 Pell Institute for Study of Opportunity in Education, *Travelers Edge A Model on the Cutting Edge of Corporate College Access and Support*, 2012 http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Travelers_EDGE_2012.pdf

college and work and other responsibilities as the major factor leading to their decision to leave college. Often in the U.S. this leaving is mediated by poor performance. By comparison students in countries in which postsecondary support is relatively high such as Norway and Netherlands students typically have support to attend full-time and less frequently have heavy work schedules. For example, in the Netherlands over 90 percent of students attend full-time and spend on average about 10 hours per week on paid work. Students indicate that this hardly influences their study progress.[59]

13. **Rewarding and Incentivizing Institutions for Serving and Graduating Low-income and Less Academically Prepared Students**. The linkage of college entrance tests and other measures of academic preparation with Socio-Economic-Status (SES) has meant that there has been a concentration of higher income students in 4-year selective private colleges and in the flagship public institutions and a very low and declining percentage of Pell recipients within these same institutions.[60] Those few Pell recipients meeting the competitive entrance requirements and admitted to the selective institutions are those that score significantly higher on entrance exams than their peers. Instead of focusing on incentivizing these high quality universities to have an educational output of higher numbers of Pell recipients, the focus of accountability has been a deficit based critique of the shortcomings of the institutions that serve large numbers of Pell recipients and have lower graduation rates on average. A more productive policy might be to encourage the high quality institutions to serve and graduate less well prepared students. In the Netherlands some private highly regarded IHE's are participating in an experiment in which they are provided with public funds to implement a more open system of admissions U.S. selective institutions could also experiment with more open admissions policies and observe how well they can graduate students who are underprepared.[61]

14. **Taking an Integrated and Holistic Approach to Student Services and Institutional Access Plans**. Several of the case study countries reported that the country sought to have a holistic approach that involved formal institutional access and completion plans. For example the report from Ireland noted that "There is significant recognition of the need for a more coherent and integrated approach to inclusion and equality in education in Ireland, throughout the lifecycle of a particular individual." [62] There is a mandate for institutions to develop clear statements and plans about links between their access programs and the community and other education partners. In terms of targeting, institutions were to set clear targets, including timescales, for the admission and graduation of specific target groups, plans to meet these students' needs based on research, and to develop a systematic

59 *Widening Participation in Norwegian Higher Education* Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA October 2013 Dr Elisabeth Hovdhaugen, Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessNorway.pdf

60 Gerald, D. and Haycock, K. (2006) *Engines of Inequality, Diminishing Equity in the Nation's Premier Public Universities*, The Education Trust, Washington DC, Mortenson, T, *Actual versus Predicted Institutional Graduation Rates, Access and Completion*, White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Washington D.C., September 19, 2011; Wilkinson R.G. and Pickett K.E., (2007), *The Problem of Relative Deprivation: Why Some Societies Do Better than Others*. Social Science and Medicine, 65 (9) 2007; Wilkinson R.G. and Pickett K.E., (2009), The Spirit Level, Equality Trust, 2009 ; Carnevale A. and Strohl J., *How Increasing College Access is Increasing Inequality and What to Do About It?* In Rewarding Strivers, 2009

61 J.J. (Hans) Vossensteyn, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, *Widening Participation in Higher Education in the Netherlands Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA*, October 2013

62 Elaine Keane, National University of Ireland, Galway, Higher Education in the Republic of Ireland Report submitted to HEFCE and OFFA, October 2013 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessIreland.pdf

approach to data collection to monitor activities. In the Netherlands, as in the United States, there is a focus on college and program match geared to personalized help in setting goals and pathways to achieve the goals. One stop shopping web sites have been developed.to remove the informational barriers and confusion over college match. Strategies are developed designed increase connectivity of a student to a specific program of study. Many institutions also started implementing "soft selection", which is also called "matching mechanisms". These include online or physical information sessions, self-assessments, motivation letters, entrance tests and intake interviews. All of these instruments result in advice to the prospective students as to whether a particular program fits their interests, motivation and/or capability. Early application is fostered as there is a high correlation between late applications and the extent to which students feel connected to a study program and their own perceived likelihood of graduation.

15. **Institutional and Student Equalization—Embedded Inclusivity and Increased Respect for Diversity of Assets**. Among the countries in the study the complex US system is characterized as having a notable degree of institutional stratification and homogenization by socio-economic status (SES) of pupils and the related ACT and SAT scores measuring academic preparedness.[63] Correspondingly there is a high degree of focus on college rankings and unequal levels of resources among institutions. To the extent that students measure their own self-worth with the ranking of the institutions to which they gain admittance and attend there is an increase in inequality. A contrasting system would be Norway.[64] Compared with many other higher education systems, the Norwegian system can be considered to have a relatively low degree of hierarchy, with institutions generally considered "equal in terms of prestige and quality." The report for Ireland notes that the "embedding inclusivity in higher education represents a shift from a more deficit view of access and widening participation towards a more relativist perspective." [65] Epidemiological researchers Kerry, Pickett and Wilkinson have observed the negative impacts of inequality pressures on biological health measures and on comparative international statistics that measure national well-being. They observed that level of inequality measures are strongly correlated with variations in the incidence of negative health and education indicators such as lower test scores and increased dropout rates.[66]

16. **Recognizing the Need for Reform in Evaluation Research**. The summary report for the case studies, noted that all the reports recognized the need for more evaluation of strategies and policies.[67] The past two decades have been ones in which there has been considerable pressure in

[63] In Australia, there is formal recognition that academic tests are more a measure of social economic class than of academic potential. In competitive admissions this recognition can results in the addition of points on the Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks (ATARs) for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[64] U.S. Department of Education, (2012), *Evidence Meets Practice: Institutional Strategies to Increase College Completion*, Available at http://www.edpubs.gov/document/ed005371p.pdf, Mortenson, T, Actual versus Predicted Institutional Graduation Rates, Access and Completion, White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Washington D.C., September 19, 2011

[65] Elaine Keane, National University of Ireland, Galway, *Higher Education in the Republic of Ireland Report* submitted to HEFCE and OFFA, October 2013 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2013/wpinternationalresearch/2013_WPeffectivenessIreland.pdf

[66] Carnevale, A., Smith, N. & Strohl, J., (2010), *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce; Carnevale A. and Strohl J., (2009), How Increasing College Access is Increasing Inequality and What to Do About it?, in Rewarding Strivers

[67] Lindsey Bowes, Liz Thomas, Louise Peck, Tej Nathwani, *International Research on the Effectiveness of Widening Participation Report to HEFCE and OFFA* by CFE and Edge Hill University October 2013

the United States for Federal and State, local or private foundation funded programs to demonstrate through external evaluations that they are "effective" in reaching their goals and also that they are "productive" and "cost-effective" in the use of funds. Thus far however, in the United States "education evaluation research" has not often been able to provide information considered of use to practitioners. Moreover, evaluation results have frequently been used by policy advocates interested in decreasing funding and criticizing or "reforming" the social welfare programs. This occurs even when positive impacts are found.[68] The result has been that social program practitioners and supporters have been in a position of defending the programs in which they are involved. A number of new programs not able to demonstrate impacts after questionable evaluations failed to show impacts have been eliminated before they even were fully implemented. It is also generally recognized that in the cases of competitive Federal programs that fund a diverse and ever changing group of grantees it is very difficult to measure impact without control group contamination. After two decades of attempting these "black box" overall national evaluations, there is currently an emphasis on smaller in-depth studies of individual strategies that may be attempted and used across programs by practitioners that show promise. There is a clear attempt to understand the link between the intervention and the impact being observed. To the extent possible these studies try to use mixed methods combining qualitative and quantitative experimental or quasi-experimental designs. However, even with studies of specific strategies experimental methods are not always possible, and these often have limited validity outside of a particular context. The other issue is that factors impacting postsecondary access and completion are systemic, dynamic and ever changing in time and context. There are new methods for evaluation (for example ----Participatory Action Research, Collaborative, and Empowerment Evaluation; Culturally Responsive Evaluation, Systems Dynamics Analysis) that hold promise. These approaches encourage internal on-going monitoring and involvement of all stakeholders including practitioners, clients, and external evaluators in providing feedback and impact assessment. The goal is to embed evaluation into program practice and to continually engage in self-study of the best methods to improve services and goal achievement.[69]

68 Margaret Cahalan and David Goodwin, *Setting the Record Straight: Strong Positive Impacts Found from the National Evaluation of Upward Bound, Re-Analysis Documents Significant Positive Impacts Masked by Errors in Flawed Contractor Reports*, The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, The Council for Opportunity in Education, June 2014., http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Setting_the_Record_Straight_June_2014.pdf

69 Information about these newer evaluation methods can be obtained at: (Action Research) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_action_research; (Empowerment Evaluation) Evaluation methods Stevenson, J.F., Mitchell, R.E., and Florin, P. (1995) *Evaluation and Self-Direction in Community Prevention Coalitions*. In Fetterman, D.M., Kaftarian, S., and Wandersman, A. (1995). *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-assessment and Accountability*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SageFetterman D., Wandersman A., (2005), Empowerment Evaluation, Principles in Practice; (Systems Evaluation) Trochim W. *The Evaluation Facilitators Guide to: Systems Evaluation Protocol*, Cornell Office for Research on Evaluation, NSF grant 0535492 2009, https://core.human.cornell.edu/research/systems/index.cfm ; *Evaluation and Regional Assistance*, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides Cahalan M. (November 2011) AEA presentation, Anaheim California, *Treating the US Educational System as a Complex Adaptive System and Investigating Computational Simulation of Federally-Funded Access Program Impacts* http://www.slideshare.net/chearsdotorg/us-college-access-programs-complex-adaptives-system-nov2011