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Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Regula and members of the House Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations for holding this hearing today on P-16 Education Systems. My name is J.B. Schramm, and I am the Founder and CEO of College Summit, an organization that I began 10 years ago in a faith-based housing project here in Washington, DC. I am honored to appear before you today to discuss several ideas that will support all of America's talented students in making a seamless transition from high school to higher education.

If I were able to leave just one point with the committee today, it would be that every year in America, approximately 200,000<sup>1</sup> low-income youth graduate from high school **ready for college** -- but do not enroll.

There is critical importance in reversing such under-enrollment:

- Every student who is first in his family to go to college ends poverty in his family line, forever
  - He'll earn an additional \$1 Million over the course of his career;<sup>2</sup> and
  - His children will be almost twice as likely to enroll themselves<sup>3</sup>
  - Moreover, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan last week called post-secondary educational opportunities "critical" to the health of our economy.<sup>4</sup>
- Finally, if we were able to correct the systems so that the 200,000 students went to college, they would contribute an additional \$80 Billion in tax revenue each year.<sup>5</sup>

As a nation, we have poured an enormous amount of resources into K-12 preparation. We have also poured a great deal into higher education – in terms of early awareness, tuition assistance, and retention support. These are critical pursuits, and Congress has made wise and valuable investments. But there is one, relatively inexpensive area -- the 12-“13” transition itself -- that our national education policy has frankly overlooked, and if Congress were to address it with even a modicum of attention, it would have a profound impact not just on college access but on high school and college success as well.

Let me tell you how I came to see the significance of The 12-13 Transition, and why I think there has traditionally been a blind spot to it in American education policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. *Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America*. Washington, D.C.: Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census, 2001; U.S. Bureau of Labor, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Data, various years.

<sup>4</sup> The Washington Post, “Greenspan Calls for Better-Educated Workforce,” Henderson, Nell, February 21, 2004, Page E01.

<sup>5</sup> Carnevale, A. P. “The Demographic Window of Opportunity.” In D. Heller (ed.), *Condition of Access: Higher Education for Lower Income Students*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002.

Growing up, I attended an inner-city public high school where I had buddies who could have gone to college but who didn't because the college transition system was broken. I saw the same phenomenon 10 years later when I ran a Teen Center in the basement of a low-income housing development here in Washington. Every student at our center received one-on-one tutoring, supporting their academic preparation. And we ran a college awareness program, starting in middle school, so that they would start thinking about college early.

Our program mirrored federal policy on college access. We provided academic preparation (like TRIO programs) and early awareness interventions (like GEAR UP). While those components are critical, it was clear something was missing. Year after year at the Teen Center, students who had the potential to go to college would sabotage their senior year and drop out, or would graduate from high school, and assure me they were going to go to college -- but they didn't. Six months later, I'd pass them on the street corner and their eyes would be dulled.

This phenomenon is not unique to the Teen Center. Data from the Congressional Advisory Committee on Financial Assistance shows that among high school seniors, students from the low-income quartile who score "A's" on achievement tests enroll in college at the same rate as the students from the top income quartile whose score on achievement tests is a "D." In other words, as the Century Foundation's recent study concludes, in America, "the least bright rich kids have as much chance of going to college as the smartest poor kids."<sup>6</sup>

Tired of seeing all of this talent wasted, I discovered two clues to the solution for the College Transition.

Clue One: The only students who routinely went to college from our neighborhood were the ones with the high test scores. The colleges knew who they were (because they paid the College Board for lists) and had bidding wars over them. But the kids with numbers "in the middle" were invisible.

Our solution is College Summit's powerful four-day, residential college application workshop held on college campuses all over the country, during which mid-tier students produce application portfolios that show personal strengths that standardized tests do not measure.

Clue Two: Middle class kids use two kinds of people to help them get to college: 1) Their college counselor, who provides expert guidance to hundreds of students; and 2) their college-experienced parent who "manages" or "nags" them through the complex application process. The schools near our housing project did have college counselors. But the students at our Teen Center didn't have college-experienced parents to play the "Manager Role."

Our solution is to train teachers to fill the "Manager Role"—complementing the work of college counselors—during a regularly scheduled class for all seniors in the high school.

Our results? We have worked with approximately 5,000 students to date. These mid-tier students, with an average high school GPA of 2.85, have enrolled in college at a rate of 79

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<sup>6</sup> America's Untapped Resource: Low-income Students in Higher Education, Richard D. Kahlenberg, ed., p. 24

percent. This far surpasses the college enrollment rate for all low-income high school graduates: 46 percent.<sup>7</sup> College Summit's college retention rate is 80 percent.

We have received the highest awards from the National Association for College Admission Counseling, The Manhattan Institute, the Knight Foundation, The Lumina Foundation, and Ashoka. Last month, we were named by Fast Company Magazine as one of the top 20 Social Capitalist organizations in the country. We have been awarded competitive grants from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and AmeriCorps. Finally, we are honored to have received an expansion grant approved by this Subcommittee.

Why is it critical for America to correct the College Transition bottleneck? Let me introduce to you Jose Silva, a College Summit alumnus from Denver, Colorado, who can explain...

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(Testimony from Jose Silva)

My name is Jose Silva. I am a 24-year-old senior at the University of Denver and participated in College Summit in 1997. I grew up in west Denver, where gangs and drugs were an everyday thing. At the age of 14 my best friend was shot and killed standing next to me. I was not your typical student; I had to deal with many issues, from where I was going to get my next meal to how will I just survive. As a result, I even dropped out of school a couple of times.

I was like a lot of the students J.B. described. My parents hadn't gone to college so they couldn't help me through the application process. I only had a 2.5 GPA. But a teacher at my high school said I was "better than my numbers" and sent me to the College Summit workshop.

I really did not know what to expect. I was blown away at the time and passion that they had for me and the other youth. Having the ability to communicate one-on-one with counselors and express to them my desires was something very unique, because where I come from it's every man for himself. I was able to get the personal attention that I needed to succeed. I met with a writing coach who helped me bring out my life story and in turn was awarded scholarships totaling over \$150,000. I enrolled at Metropolitan State College and did well enough there to earn a full-scholarship to the University of Denver. I may have only had a 2.5 GPA in high school, but I was college material.

College Summit is the reason I went to college and college has changed my life. For that I am grateful. And because I am grateful, I give back to my community in many ways, including serving as a College Summit alumni leader supporting younger College Summit students in my neighborhood. Because my goal is to help all of the young people in Denver, last fall, I was the youngest person in the city of Denver's history to run as a candidate for the Denver School Board.

Thank you for your support of College Summit and your support of the 200,000 students who could go to college—and give back the way I have—if they have the chance.

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(Schramm resumes)

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Data, various years.

What can we do to make sure that all the 200,000 low-income students who can make it in college actually make it to college? I have two recommendations regarding accountability, and one regarding innovation. On accountability, both high schools and colleges need to be measured on their successful enrollment and retention of low-income youth in college.

First, the Department of Education should track and publish college enrollment results for every high school in the country. The data is already available through the National Student Clearinghouse, a nonprofit organization that captures enrollment data on 91 percent of college students in America. We cannot be a P-16 country until we measure—and hold high schools accountable—for the college enrollment rates of their students.

Second, even though the federal government spends tens of billions of dollars on college financial assistance and retention efforts, the Department of Education does not know how well the colleges do at retaining low-income students. The Department should track and publicize the college retention rates of Pell recipients, by college, and hold colleges accountable for their performance. Moreover, the availability of this data would make it possible for influential college ranking systems, such as U.S. News and World Report's, to include this valuable gauge of college quality in their rankings.

Finally, I would urge Congress to fill the gap in its college access policy programmatically, in addressing College Transition as a complement to successful federal initiatives in college awareness and college preparation. Congress should encourage innovation in the college transition space, seeding programs that increase the college enrollment rate in low-income communities by both 1) facilitating the school-wide production of college application portfolios and post-secondary plans; and 2) supporting widespread use of holistic portfolio review in college admissions. Federal support to start these programs is critical, but to make them last, only modest per-student federal support is necessary. A key requirement of the federal funds must be a proven and ongoing ability to gain the financial support of all the key community partners: School districts, colleges, corporations, and foundations.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to discuss the importance of creating a seamless transition from grade 12 to "13," without which it is impossible to create a true P-16 pipeline. If we can build a bridge between secondary and higher education, we can ensure that all of America's talented students have the opportunities that Jose Silva has found. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Chairman Regula for his leadership on the issue of "college transition" and in support of College Summit, and also to Speaker Hastert, and Congressmen Clyburn and Shimkus for their interest in furthering College Summit's work. At the appropriate time, I would be pleased to answer your questions and share more about College Summit.

Thank you.