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# Obama's Sneaky Attack on Education

By Jean Card

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Why does the Obama administration seem to believe that some [college degrees](#) are worth more than others?

“We seek to help an additional five million Americans earn degrees and certificates in the next decade,” said President Obama in July 2009. However, looking at the policies his administration is proposing, it is starting to sound more like “We seek to help Americans earn degrees that we think are worth earning, as we see fit, under our micromanagement.”

First, thanks to the president's health care law – not a separate education bill – the feds will now lend directly to students instead of guaranteeing [bank loans](#) as they have done, with good success, for 45 years. One can't help but wonder: “With what money will the federal government make these loans? With money we borrow from China?” Which begs the question “Does China have enough money to finance education loans on top of government-run health care reform?”

And now there is more news on the Obama higher education agenda: [Private sector institutions of higher education are in the crosshairs of federal loan program officials](#). And there is no bill, health care or otherwise, for this item. Instead, the Obama Education Department is doing what clever political appointees do best: adjusting regulations in order to change policy and skip that whole pesky legislative branch step.

The regulatory changes will make qualifying for a loan nearly impossible for tens of thousands of young adults who dare enroll in a school that, gasp, tries to make a profit. You needn't worry if you are looking to enroll in a public school (i.e.: a state university or community college) or a private college (those are non-profits). But if you are seeking a vocational education, associate's or bachelor's degree from a school that runs itself more like a [business](#), you might be in a tough spot very soon.

Most people know these for-profit schools as the ones that advertise on television. Their advertising targets a working class audience trying to improve their career choices. The schools' programs encourage adults to pursue a degree, on their timeline and with their schedule, that will improve their life path in some way – primarily through the increased income that follows the earning of a degree. Programs range from certificates to bachelor's degrees in subject areas ranging from nursing to business.

Sadly, Ivy League elites disdain these schools. They are somehow lesser in their eyes. They are “just” [vocational schools](#), attended by people who don't live in nice neighborhoods or drive Volvos.

So when the elites in the politically-appointed ranks of the Obama Education Department looked into changing loan regulations, they apparently decided to take a swipe at these “lesser” schools – and, in doing so, the group of people who attend them.

The path to change in this case is a shady regulatory maze that involves new interpretations of old Congressionally-approved language that has stood the test of time for more than 40 years. In short, there would be a significant reduction in the amount of loan money available to those students hoping to improve their lives by enrolling in private-sector schools.

Without enough funds from student loans, students will be unable to pursue the education of their choice. Over 100,000 degrees, education experts estimate, will not be earned as a result of this frankly sneaky regulatory change.

Perhaps the Obama appointees think that these students should attend different schools, perhaps public schools where the government plays a bigger role? Well, the truth is that these students will likely turn to community colleges – which are shrinking their operating [budgets](#) right now, not increasing them. To accommodate the students shut out from a private sector education, the government would have to expand public education to the tune of some \$100 billion. Does anyone think the public has a thirst for that kind of additional expenditure right now?

The rationale behind this agenda item, buried in conference rooms at the end of long, cold hallways in Washington, D.C., is tough to figure out. Beyond elitism, or a belief that for-profit schools are somehow illegitimate, what reason could the regulators have for pushing down these schools?

If the Obama appointees behind this move don’t believe that private-sector schools should exist, they ought to say so. Let there be a public debate about whether private-sector schools ought to be shut down or lose their accreditation. Without a fair public debate and Congressional action, this major change in loan eligibility will go down in history as an egregious abuse of executive branch power that hurts the lives of hundreds of thousands of working people who dream of achieving something better through education. And here I thought that’s what the president wanted.

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