

OPINION

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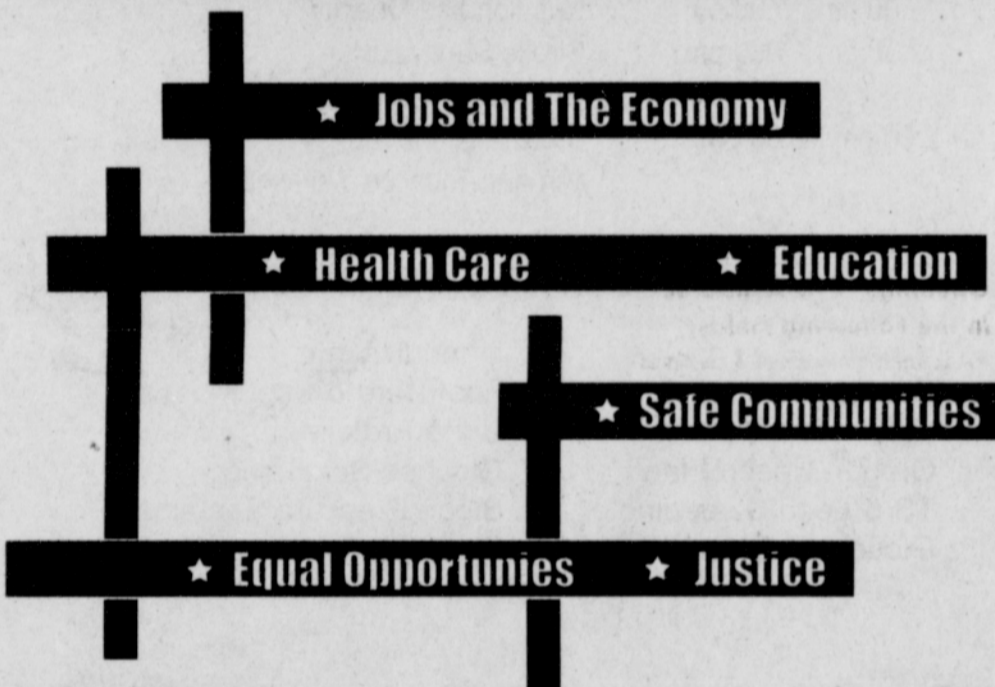
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Support Our Students

(AP)—College enrollment increased 48 percent for minorities in the 1990s, but their educational opportunities continue to trail those of white students, a new report from the American Council on Education found.

The gap points out the need for increased financial aid and improved preparation for young people entering colleges from urban school districts, William B. Harvey, director of the council's Office of Minorities in Education, said Monday as the report was released.

The Washington-based council's annual study of minorities in higher education said that while minorities made up 28 percent of the undergraduate population in 2000, they earned only 21.8 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded that year.

Harvey attributed part of the gap to students from low income households being unable to balance studies with part-time and sometimes nearly full-time employment.

Kai Mumpfield, administrative

vice president for the Black Student Union at Auburn University, agreed.

BALANCING ACT

"A lot of our students can't stay in school. If they had a choice, they would. But financially they can't afford to stay here," she said. "It comes down to a choice between going to work or going to school."

A complicating factor, Harvey said, is the lack of qualified faculty, advanced placement courses and educational infrastructures in many of the school systems dispatching minorities to colleges and universities.

Harvey called the report "an opportunity to improve the relationship between the elementary, secondary and post-secondary community. There is a big disjunction between those three and it is certainly in the interest of colleges and universities to pay more attention to the students as they move through the process."

The report was compiled using federal Department of Education statistics. Slightly more than 4 mil-

lion minorities were enrolled in American colleges and universities in 1999, according to those figures.

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY NUMBERS

While the report found increasing minority enrollment at independent colleges and universities, nearly 80 percent of minority students attended a public university in 1999, the report said. That compares with 76 percent of white students.

College enrollment of Hispanics grew 68 percent during the 1990s, the report said. Antonio R. Flores, the president of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities in San Antonio, Tex., credited the increase to "sheer demographic growth."

Looking at the Hispanic student population, Flores agreed with Harvey that there is a need for better college preparation in high school and elementary school.

"We are serving the neediest population in the country with the least amount of federal support, and that has to change," Flores said.

Screen Patients for Partner Violence

BY DR. MEL KOHN

From emotional abuse to murder, the effects of intimate partner violence range from subtly debilitating to lethal.

During 1999 and 2000, there were 46 women who died by homicide in Oregon and of these almost 60 percent were killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, partners or ex-partners.

Intimate partner violence is a major public health issue and health care providers have a major role in lessening its prevalence, scope and severity.

Intimate partner violence is characterized as a pattern of coercive behaviors that may include repeated battering and injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, deprivation and intimidation.

Depending on the scope of definition, an estimated 25,000 to 132,000 Oregon women are sub-

jected to intimate partner violence each year.

Yet, fewer than one in four Oregon women who are victims report that they discussed the abuse with their health care providers.

Public health officials are urging health care providers to screen patients for domestic violence.

As clinicians and public health providers, we must increase our efforts to identify and respond to patients at risk for intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence is a significant public health problem that affects a large proportion of the population. The role of health care providers in the prevention of serious morbidity or even death is critical.

Asking a patient if she is in an unsafe home, referring her to resources and helping her develop a safety plan can be life-saving steps.

Mel Kohn, M.D. is state epidemiologist with the Oregon Department of Human Services.

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