



**A Statement by Gaston Caperton, President of the College Board,
on the new Public Agenda Report
*Life After High School: Young People Talk About Their Hopes and Prospects***

This report sends a promising message that the vast majority of young Americans embrace the importance of college success. Their aspirations complement what research has shown, that a college degree has a high rate of return for students from all racial and ethnic groups, for men and women, and for those from all family backgrounds. Those with college degrees participate more in civic affairs and depend less on social support programs. The young people surveyed seem to understand that our global economy will continue to demand more college graduates and to believe that the experience of going to college will help them live fuller, happier lives.

Another important lesson we can take away from this report is that the influence of mentors—parents and guardians, other family members, teachers, school counselors, athletic coaches—matters deeply in a young person's life. The report gives us reason to applaud and support the efforts of families, educators, and the many successful mentoring programs that exist across our country.

This report is a call to action. It is clear that we need more counselors in our schools. We need to introduce more rigor into the high school classroom and provide better training and better pay for teachers.

Finally, we need to address disconcerting evidence that the cost of higher education is a deterrent, and in some cases, a deal breaker, for many students. Young people should know that by age 33, the typical college graduate has earned enough to compensate for both the cost of attending the average public, four-year institution and the earnings forgone during the college years. A multipronged approach to this problem includes providing better information about financial aid and admissions to students and families, increasing federal funds, and encouraging the work colleges and universities are doing to reach out to low-income students.

Discrepancies in college participation reflect an unequal education system in our country. It is the role of public education to give each child the opportunity to prepare for college. *Life After High School* underscores the need for more high-quality academic programs aimed at developing college success skills, and calls for greater financial resources to meet the changing demographics of the college-going culture. It is the responsibility of all of us to assure that the aspirations and potential of many young Americans do not continue to go unrealized.