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College Summit  
“Approaches to College Preparation” Testimony  
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Thank you, Chairman Hinojosa, Mr. Keller and members of the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee for holding this hearing today on Approaches to College Preparation. I’m J.B. Schramm, founder of College Summit. It is an honor to appear before you today, and to be on a panel with leaders from TRIO and GEAR UP, initiatives that make a big difference in the lives of young people, initiatives that College Summit is pleased to collaborate with in communities across the country.

College Summit is a nonprofit organization that began 13 years ago in a low-income housing project here in Washington, D.C. For five years, I’d been running a teen education center there and learned two major things:

1. Lots of impressive, promising young people graduated from high school college-ready and did not go to college.
  - o Nationally, every year, about 200,000 students from low-income backgrounds graduate from high school prepared for college but don’t go.<sup>1</sup>
2. The second thing I learned was that the high schools in our neighborhood didn’t want any more programs (that would come, and disappear). The high schools wanted to build their own capacity to get their students to college.

Based on these two ideas, we started College Summit to help low-income communities raise their college-going rates by helping high schools build college culture.

Why are efforts like this important for our nation?

- o Every student who is first in their family to graduate from college basically ends poverty in their family line forever
  - o They’ll earn over an additional \$2 Million over the course of their careers<sup>2</sup>; and
  - o Their children will be almost twice as likely to enroll themselves.<sup>3</sup>
- o If we were able to correct the systems so that the 200,000 students went to college each year, those students would contribute an additional \$80 Billion in federal tax revenue annually<sup>4</sup>. Programs like GEAR UP, TRIO and quality state and local efforts provide a great return on the taxpayer’s investment.

Today, College Summit works in 10 different states, with high schools serving 60,000 students. For example, we work with a majority of all high school seniors in Oakland, St.

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

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Earnings for full-time, year-round workers by educational attainment for work life of approximately 40 years.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Students Whose Parents Did Not Go to College: Postsecondary Access, Persistence, and Attainment*, NCES 2001–126, by Susan Choy. Washington, DC: 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, *Access Denied: Restoring The Nation’s Commitment To Equal Educational Opportunity*, U.S. Department of Education, February 2001.

Louis, Denver, and, thanks to the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, we will soon be working throughout 100 high schools in New York City.

Our partner superintendents, e.g., Kim Statham in Oakland and Ron Duerring in Kanawha County, WV, tell us that they value four things about our model:

1. We are capacity builders. We teach the districts “to fish” and to do this work themselves.
2. We work district-wide, with tools that help leaders manage work across schools.
3. Our results are measurable. Our schools have been significantly increasing their college-going rates school-wide over baseline, based on externally verified data.
  - a. We have received the highest award from the National Association for College Admission Counseling. For four years in a row, *Fast Company Magazine* has selected College Summit as one of the top nonprofit organizations “Changing the World.” The Skoll Foundation, The Lumina Foundation for Education, and Venture Philanthropy Partners have recognized College Summit with major grants. We have been awarded two competitive grants from the Department of Education’s FIPSE program, and have appreciated the support of Congressman Clyburn and Congressman Regula for our work.
4. And we provide significant financial support. While school districts pay for our tools, we bring significant private matching dollars to support our communities. Major supporters, including Capital One, Samberg Family Foundation, Jenesis Group, Charles Harris III and ECA Foundation have enabled us to contribute over \$30 Million to date.

What do we do?:

- We provide a course for all seniors in postsecondary planning.
  - When all students have a plan for what they will do after high school, they are more likely to finish high school successfully.
- We deliver professional development for teachers, and guidance counselors
  - Through 3-day Educator’s Institutes, we train school staff to deliver the course and raise expectations for what their students can accomplish.
- Through a 4-day residential workshop held on a college campus, we train influential students to foster college-going culture
  - Data just released by the Gates Foundation found that low-income students are four times more likely to go to college when a majority of their peers plan to go to college.<sup>5</sup>
  - These student influencers start senior year with a complete college application, including financial aid, completed, ready to support classmates and younger students.

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<sup>5</sup> Susan P. Choy, “Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students,” American Council on Education, 2002.

- We help school leaders use data to manage and evaluate progress
  - With support from Deloitte, we help the schools use real-time tracking of student progress in the classroom; and
  - Review monthly and annual outcomes reports so that the school leaders can spot innovations and spread them.

I would like to share three college access recommendations from our partners around the country.

1. *Help give high schools real time metrics on their college-going rates.*  
John Deasy, the superintendent in Prince George’s County Maryland says, “Wouldn’t it be great if every year every Superintendent and principal got real-time feedback telling us our college-going rate so we could spot what works and spread it.” The good news is that this can be done without student-level tracking.
2. *Simplify the FAFSA process.*  
Brian Kruger, a teacher at Roosevelt High School in St. Louis, MO, tells us that the FAFSA leaves his students “confused and discouraged.” Efforts to simplify the FAFSA process would make a big difference for our students, and we applaud the efforts of Mr. McKeon and Mr. Miller to achieve this.
3. *Engage the private sector to work with the schools*  
Tim and Bernie Marquez contributed \$50MM towards a \$200MM endowment to create the Denver Scholarship Foundation providing need-based scholarships for every graduate of the Denver Public Schools, the largest city-wide scholarship program in the nation. Importantly, he has worked closely with Denver superintendent Michael Bennet who brought on College Summit to help maximize this public-private partnership and drive the academic goals of the district. Private and nonprofit support; federal and local government: every sector has a role to play.

The need for higher education is so pressing, and the reward for fully tapping the promise of our diverse communities is so great, that we need to support local efforts and national programs like GEAR UP and TRIO to enhance opportunities for America’s young people in ways that produce measurable results for our young people and their families, and for America at large.

Again, thank you Chairman Hinojosa and Congressman Keller for the opportunity to discuss the importance of expanding access to higher education.