

Bill would let students pay New finance plan suggested

United Press International

To parents paying inflated college bills, a new proposal may seem like the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow.

The plan wouldn't require one cent from parents after the freshman year. The burden would be shifted to the ultimate beneficiary of college — the student.

Joe and Janie College simply would pay back the amount advanced each of the three years once they get on a payroll.

The Internal Revenue Service would handle the collection chore — requiring the indebted student to pay back 2 percent of annual earnings until the bill is paid.

Those with hefty salaries would pay off the money advanced for tuition and such in fewer years than would the workers with skinny paychecks. Conceivably, some would be poor at earning or work only in spurts; these, in theory, wouldn't pay back the money in total throughout a lifetime.

Dr. John R. Silber, the maverick president of Boston University, is the plan's architect. Rep. Michael J. Harrington (D-Mass.) has joined hands with Silber.

Jointly the two have fine-tuned a legislative proposal urging the Congress of the United States to set up a "Tuition Advance Fund" to get the model college-financing plan off the drawing board.

The proposed bill, H.R. 12668, was introduced in the House of Representatives April 20. A similar bill will need to be put before the United States Senate before the plan has a chance to be voted on.

It will have a chance, if most congressmen and senators do handturns over this plan. They are being pressured by many middle and upper income parents dipping into rainy day money or making enormous loans as they struggle with tuition, room and board bills — around \$5,000 a year at the most expensive schools.

Under terms of the proposed legislation, a self-sustaining trust fund would advance students the full cost of tuition and \$1,000 in education-related expenses.

There will be a lid: the maximum, \$5,000.

Studies show the average college graduate earns \$232,000 more than

the average high school graduate. So why not shift the burden for the major part of the basic degree cost to the one who benefits — the earner of the degree? That's the basic philosophy between the lines of the Tuition Advance Fund.

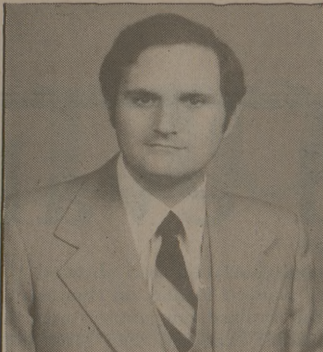
In the beginning Congress would need to earmark around \$4 billion to start up the program. More money would be added over a 20-year period. But after that the plan, in theory, would be self-supporting.

The proposal, according to Silber, also fits in with a trend in higher education these days — the tendency of students to declare themselves financially independent of their parents.

The start-up expenses would amount to a little less than twice what Americans now spend on pet food a year. Silber thinks it is a small price to pay for the means to make the full price of tuition at any institution available to any serious student.

"The Harrington bill embodies two fundamental American principles: one, that whenever possible people ought to pay for what they get; two, that equal educational opportunity ought to depend not on a student's financial ability but solely on a student's ability to be accepted at the college of his choice," said Silber.

"The Tuition Advance Fund idea program is as simple, as logical and as traditional as buying a car on time, but at monthly payments of only 2 percent of one's salary."



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