

1871

# Being prepared

**THE ISSUE**

*A national study that grades states on their preparation of high schools students for college gave Alabama a low grade, but the study also revealed a problem nationwide.*

**A** national survey of how well states prepare high school students for college found Alabama lacking in a number of areas. No surprise, you say? Keep reading.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gave Alabama a "D-" for preparing students for college and an "F" for affordability.

But Alabama was not alone in its poor grades, not by a long shot. Forty-one other states received an "F" in affordability of college. The two states that scored highest in affordability – California and Utah – scored only a "C-."

The study showed that Alabama is receiving greater benefits from graduates staying in the state. It also showed that more needs to be done for adult continuing education.

On another positive note for Alabama, the study awarded a "C" for higher education participation, a "B-" for completion and a "B" for benefits received from those with further training.

Overall, the report indicates there is a problem nationwide with qualified students having access to financial aid. In an era of emerging economic globalization, that spells trouble for the United States' ability to compete.

The scarcity of financial aid for college students is just one of the symptoms of Congress' obsession with cutting taxes in the midst of a two-front war and increased funding for homeland security in the wake of 9/11.

Financial aid has become more difficult to obtain since President Bush took office almost six years ago. That, surely, is not a legacy that any president would want – especially one who not only recognizes but embraces a global economy.

Economic studies and reports show that wages are not keeping up with inflation, which makes the availability of financial aid even more important for college students. It's scarcity is reflected in the growing number of states turning to lotteries to help students pay for their education.

Clearly, financial aid is not just a state issue. When only two states can manage high grades of "C-" in affordability, a national discussion is needed to make college more accessible to deserving students.