

President Obama Phones Student Journalists

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President urges the nation to be number one in college graduates

President Barack Obama held a telephone press conference with college and university student-journalists across the nation earlier this week.

More than 100 colleges and universities were invited to be a part of this conference call, and later had the opportunity to ask Obama questions. Students from schools such as the University of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania State and Howard University were among the many schools that were invited.

Steps that the Obama administration has taken to address the issues that most impact young students such as healthcare and money for higher education was discussed. "You go to college to learn so you can have a secure future," said Obama.

The single most important step that Obama said needs to be taken into account is making sure that "every young person gets the best education possible."

"So what I've done, starting with this past year's State of the Union address, is proposed that by 2020, we once again are number one and have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world," said Obama as he began his speech on the goal to improve higher education. The United States has fallen from first to the 12th in college graduate rates for young adults. "And we're trying to put in place some policies to help us meet this goal."

Obama said that he plans to triple the investment in college tax credits for middle-class families and raise the value of Pell Grants. The increase of Pell Grants will be monitored as a means to make sure that they keep up with inflation.

"We've done okay in terms of college enrollment rates, but more than a third of America's college students and more than half of our minority students don't earn a degree, even after six years," Obama said. "And that's a waste of potential, particularly if folks are racking up big debt and then they don't even get the degree at the end, they still have to pay back that debt, but they're not in a stronger position to be able to service it."

Also, the Affordable Care Act will allow young adults to remain under their parents' health plans until they are 26 years old.

But the main point that Obama conveyed and said that students will play a major role in is "making sure that more students complete college." Obama said his administration wants to make sure that higher education creates a workforce that is prepared for the new jobs of the future.

Camille Augustin writes for The Hilltop, the Howard University student newspaper, which originally published this article.{moshaloscan}