

MEMORANDUM

February 15, 2016

To: Managerial Communication Students

From: Jie Wang *J.W.*

Re: Case Analysis: Merit- vs. Need-Based Scholarships

Read the *Wall Street Journal* article entitled “Shift to Merit Scholarships Stirs Debate,” conduct additional research on the topic by examining relevant articles, websites, and other sources, and compose a letter to the Board of Higher Education in your state with your recommendation on whether the state should adopt a merit-based approach for awarding college scholarships.

This assignment is expected to be three to five pages in length, double-spaced. The following structure is recommended:

- I. **A brief opening paragraph** introducing the topic, letting the reader know that you have conducted extensive research on the subject and that this report will focus on an analysis of the issue from different perspectives and a recommendation for public universities in your state.
- II. **ISSUE** (Level 1 heading). In this section, summarize Georgia’s merit-based scholarship program introduced in 1993, the influence it has had on other states in terms of adoption or policy changes, and the controversy it generated.
- III. **ANALYSIS** (Level 1 heading). This section should contain a number of subheadings and occupy the majority of the space of your report. You should look at the issue of offering merit-based scholarships from a wide range of perspectives, including but not limited to those of the Georgia legislature, the universities, the students’ parents, and certainly the students.
 - a. *Georgia Legislature’s Perspective* (Level 2 heading). In this subsection, analyze the intent of the state legislature in creating the HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) scholarship program. What was the primary method of scholarship distribution prior to HOPE’s enactment in 1993? Why did Georgia change its scholarship program so drastically? What was the state legislature’s intent in charting a new course? Who was Georgia’s governor at the time and what was the governor’s background? (Refer to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article posted on Blackboard.)
 - b. *Parents’ Perspectives* (Level 2 heading). How did the students’ parents react to the change? Certainly parents’ reactions would differ based on their families’ financial circumstances and their children’s academic standing. Is it reasonable to

expect parents to ask the question, “What’s in it for me?” What do you think of the idea of an income cap (i.e., if a family’s annual income exceeds a certain level, then the student will lose eligibility for aid)?

- c. *Universities’ Perspectives* (Level 2 heading). A university’s response to the change would likely depend on how its main clientele would be affected by the new program. What kind of universities would likely support the change (or conversely, oppose it)? Did the Zell Miller Scholarships lead to better learning outcomes or higher graduation rates at Georgia’s public universities? In a related case in New Jersey (see the *Chronicle of Higher Education* article on Blackboard), Seton Hall University in 2011 instituted a merit-based tuition cut for high-achieving students, who would be eligible to pay essentially the same rate (~\$10,000/year, compared to Seton Hall’s full annual tuition rate of \$31,400) as those attending the state’s largest public university—Rutgers. Analyze the rationale behind Seton Hall’s move.
 - d. *Students’ Perspectives* (Level 2 heading). The WSJ article cited two specific cases, Amy Thornburg and Sarah Nesbit, who represent the opposite ends of the spectrum. Do you find Ohio University economics professor Richard Vedder’s argument “Our society is built on meritocracy. What is true in real life in the job market should be true in education” convincing? What about Duke University economics professor Charles Clotfelter’s contention that the HOPE scholarship program is a “stunning” example of redistribution? (Recall the charge of “wealth redistribution” during President Obama’s elections.)
- IV. **RECOMMENDATION** (Level 1 heading). State your recommended course of action on offering merit scholarships as well as the main points supporting your argument.
 - V. **CONCLUSION** (Level 1 heading). In this section, state your conclusion clearly and concisely and include implications that your recommended course of action is expected to have on the future of college scholarship distribution.
 - VI. **WORKS CITED** (Level 1 heading). Please put the list of references using the [APA documentation format](#) on a separate sheet *after* the letter.

As you work on your case report, keep in mind your primary focus is not recounting the various events but rather analyzing what led to the drastic change in scholarship distribution policy, its implications for all parties involved, and your conclusion on what the right course of action should be for your state.

Good luck on the project! Please feel free to contact me at jjewang@uic.edu if you have any questions.