

Obama trying to lower the cost of college

By Tamar Lewin, New York Times

President Obama announced a set of ambitious proposals on Thursday aimed at making colleges more accountable and affordable by rating them and ultimately linking those ratings to financial aid.

A draft of the proposal, obtained by the New York Times and likely to cause some consternation among colleges, shows a plan to rate colleges before the 2015 school year based on measures like tuition, graduation rates, debt and earnings of graduates, and the percentage of lower-income students who attend. The ratings would compare colleges against their peer institutions. If the plan can win Congressional approval, the idea is to base federal financial aid to students attending the colleges partly on those rankings.

"All the things we're measuring are important for students choosing a college," a senior administration official said. "It's important to us that colleges offer good value for their tuition dollars, and that higher education offer families a degree of security so students aren't left with debt they can't pay back."

Obama hopes that starting in 2018, the ratings would be tied to financial aid, so that students at highly rated colleges might get larger federal grants and more affordable loans. But that would require new legislation.

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