REALITY CHECK: HOW POVERTY AFFECTS LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

- Among top-performing high school students who hail from the bottom half of the income distribution, fewer than half go on to receive post-secondary degrees. (NPR, 2014)
- Just 8% of students in the bottom fourth income bracket applied to a selective school and just 34% of high-achieving students in this group attended one of the country’s 238 most selective universities. (Forbes, 2013)
- Most low-income students end up attending community colleges even if they’re qualified for 4-year institutions. (NPR, 2014)
- An increasing number of undergraduate students nationally are using food stamps. (Washington Post, 2012 & Minnesota Daily, 2013)
- Student homelessness has hit a record-high. Almost 60,000 students admitted to being homeless on the FAFSA in 2013. This number is believed an under-estimate since many families don’t realize they fit into that category or don’t want to admit to it. (CNN Money, 2013)
- A Georgetown University study demonstrated that over the past 15 years, a larger proportion of high-income students have enjoyed the benefits of rich selective institutions, while low-income students have been increasingly concentrated in poorer nonselective two-year and four-year colleges that have lower completion rates regardless of their academic ability. (Chronicle, 2013)

REALITY CHECK: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

- Annually, approximately 21 percent of undergraduate freshmen at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities (more than 1,100) are Pell grant recipients. The first-year retention rate of low-income students at the U falls about 5% behind the retention rate of all other students. (UM News, 2014)
- A recent analysis by ProPublica shows that from 1996 through 2012, public colleges and universities gave fewer and smaller grants to students with the lowest family incomes. (Chronicle, 2013)
- Federal data shows that states, as well as colleges and universities, have been trimming the aid they provide to lower-income students for years. In recent years, more colleges have done away with need-blind admissions & have reinstated early decision programs, which disadvantage low-income students who cannot commit to a college before knowing the financial offer. (CBS News, 2013 & Chronicle, 2013)
- According to New America Foundation, the poorest students increasingly are not the ones getting the help. Instead, colleges are using their resources to give students merit-based scholarships without taking family finances into account. (Businessweek, 2013)
- Increasing tuition rates with decreasing financial aid support means the poorest students are racking up student loan debt. (Spokesman Review, 2011)
- The higher education system is becoming increasingly stratified by race and income. (Chronicle, 2013)