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Free College Tuition: Should America Be Next?

In this paper, I will apply Gauthier's theory of minimax relative concession to the American college system. This theory describes a condition for agreements to be moral, in that they must minimize the difference in concessions (and gains) between both parties[1]. Through the lens of the American college system, we can consider the agreement between college students (including families) and the college, in which a student's family concedes the significant monetary cost of tuition in exchange for education and additional resources. I will discuss the possible ways for this agreement to become more moral by minimizing the relative concessions. I conclude that the best way to ensure minimax relative concession in this agreement is to decrease tuition, and I end by mentioning how the most feasible way to do so is government financial intervention.

A possible way to minimize relative concessions in this agreement is from the college's end, meaning the college should concede more or gain less. The latter does not seem beneficial, simply because having everyone worse off makes the agreement less rational. The former would consist of the college providing more resources or more work into helping students. Since most college administration already has full time jobs, it does not seem realistic for them to concede more time or effort working.

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[1] Gauthier "Overview of a Theory"

Now consider the student's party in the agreement, and to minimize relative concessions from this end, the student should either gain more or concede less. Gaining more from college creates the same problem as the college's administration conceding more. Most universities provide a multitude of resources, extracurricular opportunities, and benefits of education. It is hard to consider these gains increasing, especially not more than the tuition can be decreased. The average annual cost of college in the United States is currently over $35,700 and it has been increasing for years[2]. Substantially decreasing tuition, possibly to $0, is the most substantial way of narrowing the gap between the concessions of the student and the college in this agreement. In accordance with Gauthier's theory of minimax relative concession, something should be done to make the higher education agreement more moral, and as decreasing tuition is the most plausible and significant possibility, this should be done.

I will briefly discuss the possible ways of decreasing college tuition, so that Gauthier's theory can lead to a more specific conclusion. One possibility is decreasing the spending of colleges, which mostly includes faculty and administrative salaries and resources used at universities. Decreasing these would decrease what students gain from college, counterintuitive to our goals of minimax relative concession. Looking to colleges worldwide, the most common way to decrease tuition is government subsidizing. This has no negative effect on the minimal relative concession and is the most feasible option to minimize relative concession. In conclusion, Gauthier's theory of relative minimax concession implies that the government should help decrease college tuition, showing how its application can give us an interesting consequence of a contemporary issue.

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[2] Melanie "Average Cost of College and Tuition"

Works Cited

Gauthier, David. "Overview of a Theory." In *Morals by Agreement*, 1986.

Hanson, Melanie. "Average Cost of College and Tuition." *Education Data*, August 15, 2021.