

What a Campaign!

"President Obama once said he wants everyone in America to go to college. What a snob."
(Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum).

Santorum is wrong; and he insults not only the President but all those who hold similar aspirations for America's youth. Here's what Politifact had to say:

Santorum claimed that Obama "once said he wants everybody in America to go to college." We found 18 statements from Obama about people attending college. In the vast majority of the 18, Obama talked about making college a possibility or included the option of attending community colleges or vocational training instead. We found three that offered partial support for Santorum's claim, but their tenor was mainly about opening doors for people who want to go to college, not a clear desire that everyone enroll. We rate the claim False.

Vice President Joe Biden said there was "an ideological divide between Rick Santorum and all of America on this" (CNN^{iv}). "It's not about snobbery. It's about allowing people to live a life like their parents lived, in a middle-class environment, decent home, good school, a promise to send their kids to college and being able to take care of their parents and not have to be taken care of themselves by the time they're their parents' age."

Gov. Chris Christie (R-New Jersey) said Santorum's comments made little sense: "We should aspire to let every child reach his maximum or her maximum potential" (CBS News^v).

The majority of Americans think college is important. According to the Higher Education Policy Institute, in the last decade, the percentage of people who believe education is essential for success has doubled from 30 percent to 60 percent (Seattle Post Intelligencer^{vi}). In California, 93 percent of parents hope their children will get more than a high school education for their children, and 45 percent expect their children to get a graduate degree or higher (Public Policy Institute of California^{vii}). That these figures are not even higher than they are means that the President is fully justified in using his bully pulpit to raise aspirations for post-secondary career training and college.

The emerging Occupy Education protests reveal that students are very worried about the disinvestment in higher education amidst the economic crisis and how their aspirations are jeopardized. Santorum might argue with these students about the value of their college education, but the students are most assuredly not snobs. Across the nation, college tuition has spiked 8.3 percent with the largest increases coming to students in California's public universities and colleges, which raised tuition 21 percent (Huffington Post^{viii}). "People everywhere need to realize that the quality of and access to education is diminishing," said a Philadelphia college senior, "these budget cuts aren't just student concerns. They're part of a larger interest" (Philadelphia Daily News^{ix}).

UC Berkeley professor Robert Reich said it well, "[P]ublic education isn't just a private investment. It's a public good. Our young people—their capacities to think, understand, investigate, and innovate—are America's future" (Huffington Post^{xi}).

iv <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/01/biden-hits-santorum-over-snob-comment/>

v http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3460_162-57385379/christie-slams-santorum-on-college-stance/

vi <http://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Are-Santorum-s-comments-on-higher-ed-out-of-step-3364822.php>

vii <http://www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=999>

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http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20120301_Hundreds_of_students_call_for_lower_tuition_debt_forgiveness.html

xi http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-reich/santorum-snob_b_1310458.html