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Does the U.S. Really Need More College Graduates? U.Va.'s Miller Center Kicks off National Debate Series with Education Debate

Washington, D.C. – Does the United States need more college graduates to remain an economic power, or is college just too expensive to benefit many Americans? That will be the focus of a debate that the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, in partnership with MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, is holding **Friday, February 26 at 7:00 pm** at the National Press Club. It will air on PBS stations across the country. It will also be available online at www.millercenter.org.

Participants include:

- Richard Vedder, Director, The Center for College Affordability and Productivity; Economics Professor, Ohio University
- George Leef, Research Director, The John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy
- Margaret Spellings, former U.S. Secretary of Education
- Michael Lomax, President and CEO, United Negro College Fund

Paul Solman, business and economics correspondent for “*PBS NewsHour*,” will moderate the debate.

Today, about 40 percent of Americans, aged 25 to 34, have graduated from college. That figure has remained stable for decades, while graduation rates in other countries, including China, have increased dramatically in recent years.

Debate participants will argue several questions, including: To remain an economic superpower, does the U.S. need to focus on jobs that require innovation and critical thinking, skills best acquired in college, because it cannot compete with the world on the price of labor? Are college graduates better off financially and socially? Or with annual tuition averaging \$20,000 for public

colleges and \$30,000 for private schools, does the cost of college outweigh the benefits for many Americans? Is it sound public policy to urge Americans to go to college, with the personal savings rate at its lowest since the Great Depression?

If you're interested in attending, please e-mail or call one of the contacts listed above.

This debate is part of a series that the Miller Center will produce this year. A debate on whether the traditional model of higher education is broken will be held on April 27. In this debate, participants will discuss several trends in education, including increased tuition costs, declining public investment, and the advent of for-profit and online programs.

The Miller Center of Public Affairs is a leading nonpartisan public policy institution aimed at bringing together engaged citizens, scholars, members of the media and government officials to focus on issues of national importance to the governance of the United States, with a special interest in the American presidency.

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