

October 16, 2009

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/16/opinion/l16krugman.html?scp=1&sq=Gail%20Mellow&st=cs>
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LETTER

A School's Painful Decision

To the Editor:

Re "[The Uneducated American](#)" (column, Oct. 9):

Paul Krugman's column certainly hit home, as I recently had to make the unprecedented, painful decision to close enrollment at LaGuardia Community College. More than 1,000 students — almost all of whom are low-income and the first generation of students in their families to seek a college education — were unable to enroll.

We have neither the classrooms nor the faculty and staff to handle surging demand. This happens as students understand that success in today's global economy requires an education beyond the high school level.

The problem is similarly acute across the nation; community colleges are experiencing unprecedented enrollment growth and flat or declining budgets.

Responding to these challenges, President Obama has proposed an ambitious but necessary goal: by 2020 to once again have America lead the world in the proportion of our citizens who graduate from college.

Closing admissions to qualified students and deep cuts in higher

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education budgets by states across the nation will make that goal only harder to achieve. What's needed now is a strong and steady federal commitment to bolster state and local governments during this recession to ensure that Americans don't find a "sold out" sign hanging at the admissions office when they come to get a college degree.

Gail O. Mellow

Long Island City, Queens, Oct. 9, 2009

The writer is the president of LaGuardia Community College.