

OPINION

LETTERS

More to college
than money

Re "Economy crimps college dreams," May 1

The article suggests that having to attend California State Long Beach, rather than USC, is somehow a tragedy for Krystal Rodriguez. Actually, I think the Rodriguez family should count their blessings (and saved dollars).

If there is a silver lining to the present economic situation, it is that people reluctantly sending their kids off to a public university will be pleasantly surprised to learn that the value of an education does not necessarily come from the amount of money you pay for it.

Struggling middle-class families do have affordable alternatives — the public

higher education system of California. And that is one more reason legislators and voters should think long and hard before taking the ax to higher education and raising fees for public university tuition.

ANDREW JENKS
Long Beach

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"I feel like the whole system failed us ... I don't want to be the one who failed her," Ruth Rodriguez, the mother of the profiled student, says.

Please enlighten me on the "system" that guarantees money for students to attend an excessively expensive private university.

When you find out, please let me know. I have an equally qualified senior.

JIM HALL
Huntington Beach

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Your article omits the important point that USC's undergraduate admission decisions remain blind with respect to student financial need. USC admits the most promising students who apply, period. We examine transcripts and essays, not checkbooks.

USC remains committed to providing every undergraduate a combination of grants and loans sufficient to meet demonstrated financial need. More than 60% of USC's 16,000 undergraduates receive some form of aid. More than 70% of \$185 million in USC-funded student aid is reserved for need-based awards.

We always wish we could do more, and we keep trying.

JAMES E. MOORE
Los Angeles

The writer is an engineering professor and department chair at USC familiar with admissions.

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Rodriguez's disappointment to find that, for financial reasons, she might not be able to attend USC, her dream school. I suspect, though, that if she ends up attending Cal State Long Beach (to which "she had resigned herself") or any CSU, she will find herself pleasantly surprised.

This is especially true if she has been admitted to the honors program, which I imagine she has, given her strong academic record. The CSU campuses are designed for undergraduates, and the faculty members, who are highly qualified specialists in their fields, focus on their own research and on meeting the needs of their students.

Most of the CSU campuses lack large lecture halls. This means that almost all classes are limited in size; Krystal will get to know her professors, and they will know her. Honors classes are even smaller, usually limited to 20 students.

In my history department, there are no teaching assist-

ants or readers, so we do all of our own grading. That means that we know our students' work very well and can help them with their applications to graduate programs and scholarships.

AMANDA PODANY
Pomona

The writer is a professor of history at Cal Poly Pomona.

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How did the "system" fail Rodriguez? Is it the responsibility of a private university or the state and federal governments to offset the high cost of college for every student? Are we supposed to feel sorry for a husband and wife who have an annual income of \$140,000 who can't send their daughter to USC?

It must be hard to spend four years at a high school that tells you from Day 1 that you are the cream of the crop, but in reality you are just like everyone else from the middle class.

MARCEL BELEK
Long Beach