# Sanders' tuition plan doomed to fail

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**By Jesse Carr**

In 1993, the average loan amount per borrowing student was just under $10,000. Less than 15 years later, the average loan amount has sky rocketed to over $35,000.

Of graduating seniors receiving Bachelor's degrees in 2015, 71 percent will have a student loan.

From an economic standpoint, nothing in America has risen as rapidly and radically as the price of tuition for students. Insert Senator Bernie Sanders, the savior of the indebted American college student and college graduate.

While most other candidates focus on immigration and foreign policy, Sanders has built his campaign on the platform of free college tuition and student loan deferment.

After a decisive victory in New Hampshire, Sanders continued to harp the importance of free tuition: "When we need the best-educated workforce in the world, yes, we are going to make public colleges and universities tuition-free," he said.

However, while the solution to the problem of student loans and the price increase of tuition over the last 15 years seems to be free tuition, Sanders plan isn't fool proof.

While Sanders swept the tables in New Hampshire, his narrow loss to Hillary Clinton in Iowa revealed a more accurate reflection of his voter demographics, and some of the struggles he will face moving forward towards a potential nomination and national election. Essentially, Sanders' only reliable demographic of support is young, poor voters, who are interested in free tuition. Even though New Hampshire broke that trend, Sanders was playing in his own backyard and therefore had the upper hand during the first primary.

This became all too true for Sanders in the South Carolina primary where he was swept, drastically, by Clinton.

Even though Sanders' #FeelTheBern movement has been picking up some national momentum, the question remains: Is Bernie Sanders' free tuition plan possible? And can he capture the votes of those who aren't completely sold on his free tuition plan?

Jeffrey J. Selingo, a professor at Arizona State University wrote in the *Washington Post*, "The idea of free college might sound great to students and their parents worried about the staggering cost of a degree, but the experience of a dozen states during the past decade shows that free tuition fails to change the college-going patterns of low-income students and quickly becomes an entitlement for those students who need it the least."

Selingo, referencing Louisiana and Georgia who have attempted since the 1990s to provide free tuition plans similar to Sanders' plan, makes a good point. The outcome in both states was that college tuition continued to rise, and the demographic of college students remained the same. Those who would have gone to college anyways continued to go, and those who would not have been able to afford it still didn't attend or complete their degree due to other reasons.

Selingo went on to point out that the continual rise of tuition in these states ultimately led to cuts in the programs intended to fund the tuition. "In other states where colleges controlled tuition rates, the cost of the scholarships

became unsustainable over time as tuition prices continued to rise and lottery revenues didn't keep pace. So states started to trim the program's benefits — paying for partial tuition, limiting the number of semesters students could get the awards, or shifting the grade requirements needed to keep the scholarship," he wrote.

Sanders' free tuition platform is appealing to millennials, but as a millennial who has worked hard to ensure that I graduate college debt free, without the assistance of my parents or an existing college fund, it is possible for anyone that is willing to work hard to earn a college degree without going into debt.

While Sanders' plan seems appealing, it would seem that the proof of its ineffectiveness lies within the states who have already attempted such free tuition programs.