



US education secretary visits SC school



Arne Duncan

Education Secretary Arne Duncan speaks March 2 during a forum on education at American University in Washington. Duncan, U.S. Rep. James Clyburn, former South Carolina Gov. and U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley visited with about 75 juniors and seniors from Scott's Branch High School on Friday.

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Page 2 of 3

"What tips do you have for us, to help us be one step ahead of our competition?" asked 17-year-old senior Courtney Manning, who said she wants to be a neonatal nurse and plans to attend the University of South Carolina-Upstate.

"What about the cost of college tuition? Do you ever see it decreasing?" queried Hope Junious, 17, another senior who said she intends to study biology at Clemson University.

The men urged the students to seek as much financial aid as possible, to stick with any kind of post-high school education they can find — whether in four-year, two-year, or technical and trade schools — and to keep their dreams alive.

"It's important for you to believe in yourself," said Riley, who has been backing efforts to reform education in the state through the Riley Foundation at Furman University.

"Don't let anybody tell you, you can't do it," added Clyburn. "Remember the South Carolina state motto: 'While I breathe, I hope.' Live by it."

Duncan told the students that economic need shouldn't be a bar to them getting an education, saying that over the next 10 years there will be \$40 billion in federal grants available to those in financial need.

"That's right. 'B' as in billion," Duncan said. "If you are concerned about money for college, don't let anyone tell you that you can't take that next step." He said his department was trying to work with universities to keep tuition in check and to make sure schools offer accurate information so students know what their costs will be over several years, and what the graduation rates truly are.

Manning said afterward she was pleased the officials made the visit, and stressed the importance of science education. "My sister has cerebral palsy, so that's why I want to become a nurse and help people."

Junious said she hopes to use her science education to become a nurse, or surgeon.

- [Previous Page](#)
- [1](#)
- [2](#)
- [3](#)
- [Next Page](#)

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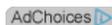
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