About one in every five American students is attending college in a state other than the one in which he or she resides. The national percentage for undergraduate students is about 17 percent; the ratio for graduate students is somewhat higher. At the same time, hundreds of colleges and many state legislatures act to curb these mass flows across state lines. Faced with rising educational costs and lagging income, more and more states take the parochial viewpoint that “their” universities are for “their” students. Thus, the large differences in tuition and other charges levied on out-of-staters as compared to resident-students are further expanded to discourage out-of-staters and to take advantage of a means of attaining more funds.

For example, 99 state universities jacked up their tuition fees for non-residents by 17.0 percent (from 1970-71 to 1971-72), while for residents the increase was only 8.8 percent. Total charge increases were almost three times as high: 12.7 percent for non-residents compared to 4.4 percent for residents. Average tuition charge for residents was $470; for non-residents, $1,119.

Forty institutions went a step further: they set up a quota limiting the number of out-of-state students to a set proportion of each freshman class, usually between 15 percent and 25 percent. Little wonder the proportion of out-of-state applicants

Amitai Etzioni is a professor of sociology at Columbia University and director of the Center for Policy Research.
began to decline; it fell 5.25 percent in a recent year. If this trend continues—and it seems to be accelerating—fewer and fewer students will cross state lines to study.

I would like to restate briefly the quite well-known reasons why this development is undesirable and suggest a way to eliminate the problem at minimal cost.

Reducing the ratio of out-of-staters will tend to increase campus homogeneity and thus heighten interstate segregation, a development which is undesirable on several accounts. For the individual student, college attendance should be a period of expanding horizons and experiences. One way this is achieved is by allowing them to study, indeed to live, with persons of different backgrounds. Most kids go to high schools whose student bodies are drawn largely from one class, ethnic, sometimes religious, and always regional, background. It tends to be the same as their neighborhood. Thus, Harlem students tend to go to largely black high schools, and Scarsdale kids to upper-middle-class schools. Busing has not really solved this problem, as still only a minority of students are bused across class and ethnic lines. (Most students bused are not bused for integration purposes.) Hence colleges are usually the first real chance, and often the last, for a great societal mixer, a place where persons of all backgrounds coming from different regions will get to know each other as persons and not as stereotypes.

Socially, America has long been an under-integrated society. It is more heterogeneous than most societies because it is larger, more populous, and has a greater variety of subcultures. It also lacks the unifying effects of a dominant institutionalized religion (as in Spain), of a centralized school system with a unified curriculum (as in France), or universal draft (as in Israel). No wonder inter-group conflicts are often more intense, and interregional tensions higher, than in these countries. The colleges, in which future leaders of America, various subcommunities, and about half of its citizens are educated, are the places where many crossing ties may be evolved and a shared national perspective may be developed. Thus, on both personal and social accounts, interstate flows of students should be encouraged rather than hindered.

This could be achieved by an interstate clearinghouse combined with a limited federal underwriting. All the out-of-state students would be registered with the clearinghouse and each state would be credited for all the students of other states it hosts. At the same time all the students of that particular state studying elsewhere would be debited to it. In this way a good part of the problem would be eliminated because, for example, while some New Yorkers are charged by the University of California out-of-state fees, Californians are charged out-of-state fees by the State University of New York. These would, in fact, cancel out here without the students themselves being charged.

When once a year all interstate accounts are settled, some states will have net balances. States with positive balances could then be paid and the income divided among the colleges which do not discriminate against out-of-staters. Those states which have negative balances could be charged by the clearinghouse. This would encourage states, such as New Jersey, which have relatively neglected their higher education institutions and relied on other states, to develop their colleges. Or, the federal government may absorb the difference, as it is in the national interest to enhance interstate flow of students to encourage a more mutually tolerant, culturally rich, and united America.