Hillary highlights New College Compact at Claremont campaign stop

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By ALLAN STEIN | Aug 12, 2015

Photo by: D.F. Dascenzo Hillary Clinton took the stage at River Valley Community College in Claremont Tuesday to share her ideas regarding higher education finance reform as she continues her campaign for the presidency in 2016.

CLAREMONT — A town hall-style meeting room jam-packed with Hillary Clinton seekers cheered as the Democratic presidential hopeful pitched her "New College Compact" for finance reform in higher education.

"I think this is a major challenge. I want to address it. Not one word from the other side," said Clinton, appearing before a capacity crowd that had gathered Tuesday at River Valley Community College in Claremont.

For the next 90 minutes, Clinton delved into her plan to address the high cost of tuition and student loans, and deceptive marketing tactics used by private colleges and universities.

The invitation-only town hall meeting focused on a narrow spectrum of issues that did not include much on foreign policy.

"I am running for president to renew the basic [premise] that if I work hard I should be able to get ahead and stay ahead," Clinton said.

"The deck is really stacked in favor [of the wealthy]. We have to reshuffle that deck and we have got to do what needs to be done to raise incomes," she said.
Clinton said she believes a college education is "still a good investment." She said a graduate of a four-year college can expect to earn $500,000 more in their lifetime than a high-school graduate.

The new college compact, Clinton said, "asks for something from everybody."

She said it asks for individual states to reinvest in public higher education, "in the right places," and to provide financial incentives to lower tuition costs.

Clinton said the federal government would "bypass" those states that decide not to participate in the compact.

"Our goal is to work with states whenever and wherever possible, but not to the detriment of these states and hurting the people who live in these states," Clinton said.

She said her plan would significantly cut the interest rate on student loans and ensure that the government does not profit when students borrow to pay for college.

The pact would "force" schools to focus on student outcomes "rather than their bottom lines," she said.

The former Secretary of State under President Obama said she supports his plan to provide free community college tuition.

"We've done the numbers. We can do this if we are committed to it," Clinton said.

She said the federal pact would offer "robust educational benefits" for servicemen and women with programs similar to the GI Bill and Americorps.

It would also provide students with opportunities to work off college loan debt, Clinton said.

Clinton said the pact would "crack down" on private colleges and universities that "are engaging in fraud and look to ways to hold them accountable to everyone else."

"I am excited about what we can do to help hardworking families and ambitious young people to get the skills they need," Clinton said.

Later the candidate addressed questions from the audience on topics ranging from climate change to promoting gender and racial equality and maintaining the Social Security system.

"We can't allow the Republican right wing talking machine to make us think Social Security is on its death bed, because it is not. I will defend Social Security. It is a critical safety net program. I don't know what we would do without it. I don't want to find out," Clinton said.