

Is College Worth It?

Released: May 15, 2011

College Presidents, Public Assess, Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education

By Paul Taylor, Kim Parker, Richard Fry, D'Vera Cohn, Wendy Wang, Gabriel Velasco and Daniel Dockterman

Executive Summary

This report is based on findings from a pair of Pew Research Center surveys conducted this spring. One is a telephone survey taken among a nationally representative sample of 2,142 adults ages 18 and older. The other is an online survey, done in association with the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), among the presidents of 1,055 two-year and four-year private, public, and for-profit colleges and universities. ([See a description of our survey methodology.](#))

Here is a summary of key findings:

Survey of the General Public

- **Cost and Value.** A majority of Americans (57%) say the higher education system in the United States fails to provide students with good value for the money they and their families spend. An even larger majority—75%—says college is too expensive for most Americans to afford. At the same time, however, an overwhelming majority of college graduates—86%—say that college has been a good investment for them personally.
- **Monetary Payoff.** Adults who graduated from a four-year college believe that, on average, they are earning \$20,000 more a year as a result of having gotten that degree. Adults who did not attend college believe that, on average, they are earning \$20,000 a year less as a result. These matched estimates by the public are very close to the median gap in annual earnings between a high school and college graduate as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010: \$19,550. A more detailed Pew Research Center analysis ([see Chapter 5](#)) shows that this gap varies by type of degree and field of study.
- **Student Loans.** A record share of students are leaving college with a substantial debt burden, and among those who do, about half (48%) say that paying off that debt made it harder to pay other bills; a quarter say it has made it harder to buy a home (25%); and about a quarter say it has had an impact on their career choices (24%).
- **Why Not College?** Nearly every parent surveyed (94%) says they expect their child to attend college, but even as college enrollments have reached record levels, most young adults in this country still do not attend a four-year college. The main barrier is financial. Among adults ages 18 to 34 who are not in school and do not have a bachelor's degree, two-thirds say a major reason for not continuing their education is the need to support a family. Also, 57% say they would prefer to work and make money; and 48% say they can't afford to go to college.
- **Split Views of College Mission.** Just under half of the public (47%) says the main purpose of a college education is to teach work-related skills and knowledge, while 39% say it is to help a student grow personally and intellectually; the remainder volunteer that both missions are equally important. College graduates place more emphasis on intellectual growth; those who are not college graduates place more emphasis on career preparation.
- **For Most College Graduates, Missions Accomplished.** Among survey respondents who graduated from a four-year college, 74% say their college education was very useful in helping them grow intellectually; 69% say it was very useful in helping them grow and mature as a person; and 55% say it was very useful in helping them prepare for a job or career.
- **Above All, Character.** While Americans value college, they value character even more. Asked what it

takes for a young person to succeed in the world, 61% say a good work ethic is extremely important and 57% say the same about knowing how to get along with people. Just 42% say the same about a college education.

Survey of Presidents

- **Right or Wrong Direction?** Six-in-ten college presidents say the system of higher education in this country is headed in the right direction, but a substantial minority—38%—say it is headed in the wrong direction.
- **Declining Student Quality.** A majority of college presidents (58%) say public high school students arrive at college less well prepared than their counterparts of a decade ago; just 6% say they are better prepared. Also, 52% of presidents say college students today study less than their predecessors did a decade ago; just 7% say they study more.
- **We're Not Number One.** Only 19% of college presidents say the U.S. system of higher education is the best in the world now, and just 7% say they believe it will be the best in the world ten years from now. Most presidents —51%—describe the U.S. system as one of the best in the world.
- **Doubts about Achieving Obama's Goal.** Nearly two-thirds of college presidents (64%) say it is unlikely that, by 2020, the U.S. will achieve the goal set by President Obama to have the highest share of young adults with a college degree or certificate of any country in the world.
- **Who Should Pay?** Nearly two-thirds of college presidents (63%) say students and their families should pay the largest share of the cost of a college education. Just 48% of the public agrees. An equal share of the public would prefer that the bulk of the cost of a college education be borne by the federal government, state governments, private endowments or some combination.
- **Split Views of College Mission.** Presidents are evenly divided about the main role colleges play in students' lives: Half say it is to help them mature and grow intellectually, while 48% say it is to provide skills, knowledge and training to help them succeed in the working world. Most heads of four-year colleges and universities emphasize the former; most heads of two-year and for-profit schools emphasize the latter.
- **Measuring Grade Inflation:** Just over a quarter (27%) of college presidents say that the faculty at their own institution grades students too leniently. Only 1% says they grade students too stringently. The vast majority (73%) says students are graded about right.
- **Scant Enthusiasm for Faculty Tenure.** Only a quarter (24%) of presidents say that, if given a choice, they would prefer that most faculty at their institution be tenured. About seven-in-ten say they would prefer that faculty be employed on annual or long term contracts.

About the Surveys

This report is largely based on findings from two Pew Research Center surveys conducted in the spring of 2011.

The general public survey (GP) is based on telephone interviews conducted with a nationally representative sample of 2,142 adults ages 18 and older living in the continental United States, including an oversample of 336 adults ages 18-34. A total of 1,052 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline telephone and 1,090 with those contacted on their cellular phone. The data are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the continental United States. Survey interviews were conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International, in English and Spanish. For more details, see Appendix 1.

- Interviews conducted March 15-29, 2011
- 2,142 interviews
- Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points for results based on the total sample and 4.5 percentage points for adults 18 to 34 years old at the 95% confidence level.

The college presidents survey (P) is based on a web survey conducted with 1,055 college and university presidents in the U.S. The survey was designed by the Pew Research Center in association with the Chronicle of Higher Education. Overall, 1,022 interviews were completed online and 33 interviews were completed by phone (for the presidents who requested being interviewed by phone). The college and university presidents surveyed are from four major sectors: 1) private four-year colleges and universities; 2) public four-year colleges and universities; 3) two-year public and private colleges; 4) four-year and two-year for-profit colleges and universities. The data were weighted to correct for disproportionate non-response that might bias sample estimates. The weighting accounts for both the institution type and geographic distribution of the colleges and universities eligible to take part in the survey. Survey interviews were conducted in English under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. For more details, see Appendix 1.

- Interviews conducted March 15-April 24, 2011
- 1,055 interviews
- Margin of error is plus or minus 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level for results based on the total sample, 4.8 percentage points for presidents of four-year public universities, 3.8 percentage points for presidents of four-year private universities, 4.6 percentage points for presidents of two-year colleges (public or private), and 11.3 percentage points for presidents of private for-profit colleges and universities.

Notes on Terminology

Unless otherwise noted, “college graduates” refers to those who graduated from a four-year college and hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.

In referring to institutions of higher education, the terms “school,” “institution,” “college” and “university” are used interchangeably, except that “university” does not apply to two-year institutions.

“Private college” refers to private (as opposed to public) not-for-profit (NFP) colleges and universities. This term is not intended to apply to private, for-profit colleges.

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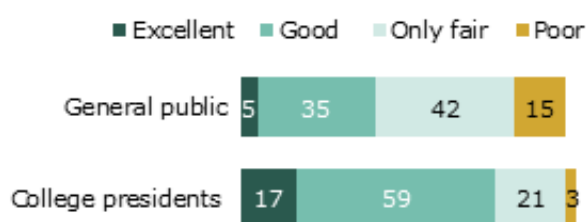
College Presidents, Public Assess, Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education

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Chapter 1: Overview

Is College a Good Value?

% who rate the job the higher education system is doing in providing value for the money spent by students and their families as ...



Note: Views from the general public (GP) are based on a Pew Research Center survey of 2,142 adults, March 15-29

A majority of Americans (57%) say the higher education system in the United States fails to provide good value for the money students and their families spend, and about four-in-ten college presidents say the system is headed in the wrong direction, according to a pair of new nationwide surveys—one of the general public; the other of college presidents—conducted by the Pew Research Center.

At a time when sharply rising student debt burdens have touched off a national debate about the cost and value of a college education, the public survey shows that fewer than one-in-four Americans (22%) believe that most people today can afford to pay for a college education, down from 39%

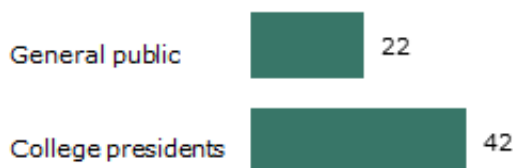
PEW RESEARCH CENTER SURVEY OF 2,172 ADULTS, MARCH 13-23, 2011; VIEWS FROM THE COLLEGE PRESIDENTS (P) ARE BASED ON A PEW RESEARCH CENTER SURVEY OF 1,055 COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, MARCH 15-APRIL 24, 2011. "DON'T KNOW/REFUSED" RESPONSES NOT SHOWN.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/17, P/7

who felt this way a quarter of a century ago.

Is College Affordable for Most People Today?

% who agree



PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/14, P/6

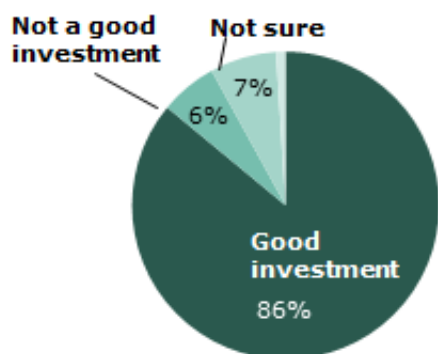
College presidents are not as concerned as the public about

affordability, but their survey responses reveal broad misgivings about quality and standards—both of the institutions themselves and of the students attending them.

For example, just 19% of the 1,055 college presidents surveyed say they believe that the U.S. system of higher education is the best in the world. And just 7% say they think it will be the best in the world 10 years from now.

Has College Been a Good Investment for You?

Share of college graduates who say ...



Note: Based on four-year college graduates ages 18-64 who are not currently enrolled in school, n=513. "Don't know/Refused" responses are shown but not labeled.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/18

In addition, most college presidents (52%) say college students today study less than their predecessors did a decade ago, while just 7% say they study more. And 58% say that public high schools are doing a worse job of preparing students for college now than they did a decade ago, while just 6% say they are doing a better job.

Not all findings from the two surveys are downbeat. While a minority of the public says students get excellent (5%) or good (35%) value for the money they and their families spend on college, an overwhelming majority of the college graduates surveyed—86%—say that college has been a good investment for them personally.

The Big Payoff

The Annual College Payoff: \$20,000

How much more/less do you think you would earn annually if you did/didn't have a college degree?

The Public's Estimates

| | |
|---|---------------|
| High school graduates (If I had a college degree) | \$20,000 more |
| College graduates (If I didn't have a college degree) | \$20,000 less |

Census Data

2009 median annual earnings, all workers, March 2010 CPS

| | |
|-----------------------|----------|
| College graduates | \$46,931 |
| High school graduates | \$27,381 |

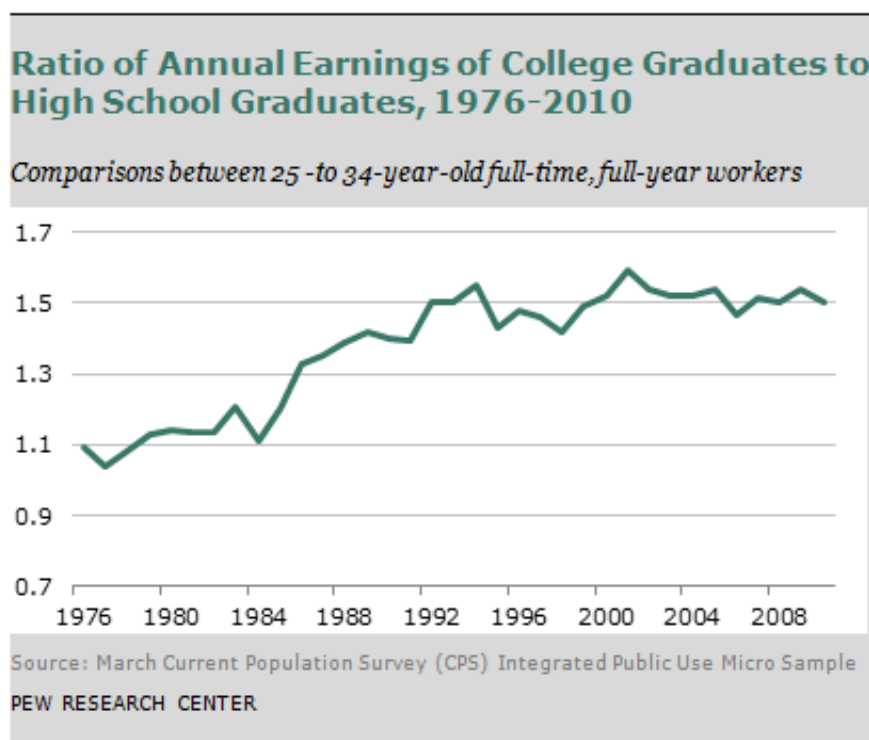
Median annual difference \$19,550

Note: "College graduates" refers to people with a four-year college degree and no advanced degrees. The public's estimates are based on median estimates of Q.39, Q.40 in the general population survey (GP).

Moreover, the survey shows that the public has a keen awareness of the substantial earnings dividend that college graduates enjoy in their working lives.

In response to a survey question, adults with a college degree estimated, on average, that they earn \$20,000 a year more by virtue of having gotten that degree. Likewise, the survey finds, adults with only a high school diploma believe, on average, they earn \$20,000 a year less as a result.

These mirror-image estimates are not only in sync with each other, they're spot on with the relevant government data. According to 2010 Census Bureau data, the gap in median annual earnings between a worker with a high school diploma and one with a college degree is \$19,550. According to a Pew Research analysis of census data, over the course of a forty-year working life, the typical college graduate earns an estimated \$550,000 more than the typical high school graduate, even after factoring in the costs and foregone earnings associated with going to college.



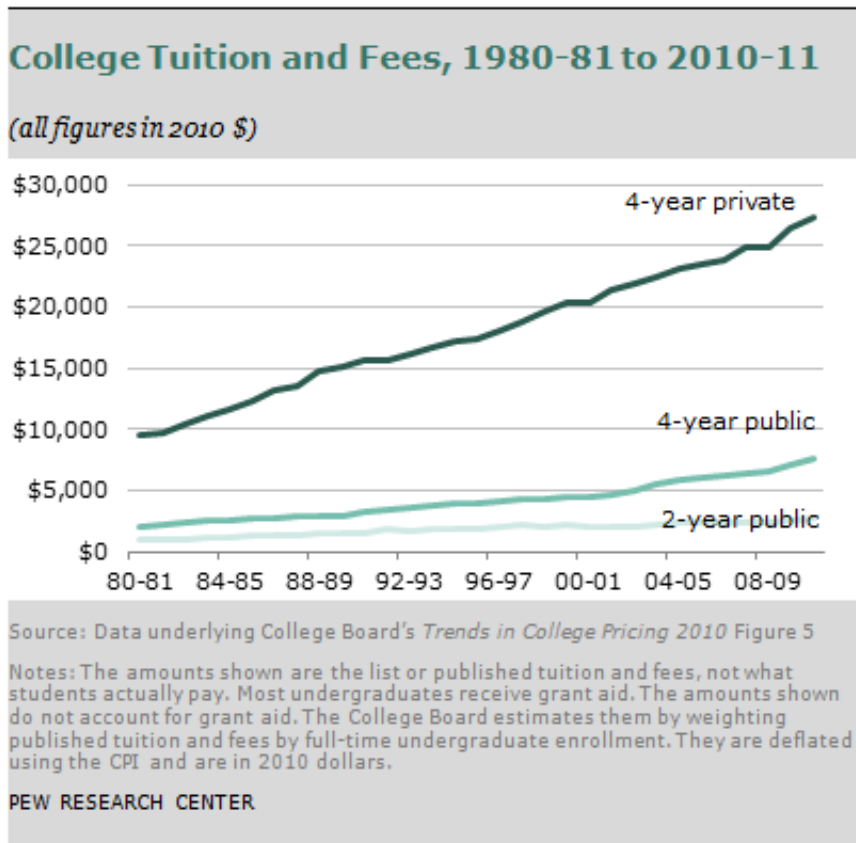
The education-based earnings gap among workers grew steadily from the mid-1970s through the mid-1990s and has been relatively stable since then (see chart to the right), according to a Pew Research analysis of census data. However, because college graduates are more likely than high school graduates to be employed, the earnings gap somewhat understates the full marketplace premium that accrues to those with a college degree. (See Chapter 5 for a detailed analysis of the differences in work life earnings by different levels of education and different fields of study.)

Beyond these dollars-and-cents evaluations, the Pew Research survey finds that college graduates, on average, are happier and more satisfied with their jobs, their financial situation and their education than are those who did not attend college. It also finds that most graduates say that their college education was very useful in helping them grow intellectually (74%), mature as a person (69%) and prepare for a job or career (55%).

College remains a near universal aspiration in this country, even in the face of steeply rising costs. Among parents of a child ages 17 or younger, fully 94% say they expect their child (or children) to attend college.

But the survey also finds that while Americans place considerable stock in the value of college, they see

character traits, not education, as the most important determinants of success in life. When asked what it takes for a young person to succeed in the world, more people point to traits such as a good work ethic (61% say this is extremely important) and knowing how to get along with people (57%) than say the same about a college education (42%).



The pair of Pew Research surveys were conducted at a time when the cost of a college education—at both public and private institutions—has roughly tripled since 1980 in inflation-adjusted dollars; when more students than ever are borrowing to finance their educations; and when the typical student who graduates from a four-year college with an outstanding loan starts out with a record balance of \$23,000.

The survey of the general public was conducted by landline and cellular telephone from March 15 to 29, 2011, among a nationally representative sample of 2,142 adults living in the continental United States. A separate online survey of college presidents, by the Pew Research Center in association with the Chronicle of Higher Education, was conducted from March 15 through April 24, 2011, among the leaders of 1,055 two-year and four-year private, public, and for-profit colleges and universities with 500 or more students enrolled.

Here are key findings from the two surveys:

Cost and Value

Who Should Pay for College?

% saying the largest share of students' college expenses should be paid by...

- Students/their families
- State government
- Federal government
- Private donations
- Some combination (vol)



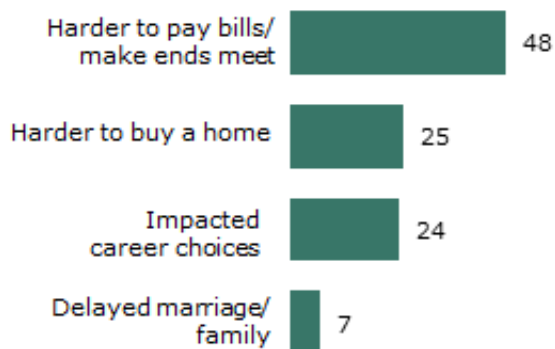
Note: The response categories of this question were slightly different in the two surveys because of the different survey modes. In the GP survey, which was conducted by telephone, a volunteered response of "some combination" was accepted. In the presidents' survey, which was conducted online, the volunteered option was not available. "Don't Know/Refused" or "No answer" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/20a, P/27

- **Who Should Pay for College?** Nearly two-thirds of college presidents (63%) say students or their families should pay the largest share of the cost of a college education; just 48% of the general public agrees. Among the public, a significant minority would prefer that the main burden be carried either by the federal government (18%), states (12%), private donations and endowments (5%) or some combination (13%). The demographic groups least likely to say that the main cost of college should be borne by students and their families include blacks, Hispanics, young adults and low-income adults.
- **Most Americans Say College Students Don't Get Good Value for the Money They and Their Family Spend...** Just 5% of the public says college students receive excellent value for the money they and their families spend; some 35% say they receive good value; 42% say only fair; and 15% say poor. Views on this question are similar among those who attended college and those who did not. However, college presidents have a different view. More than three-quarters say students receive excellent (17%) or good (59%) value for the money they and their families spend on higher education. Heads of public four-year colleges are more upbeat about the cost/value trade-off (32% say it is excellent) than are heads of private four-year colleges (17% excellent).
- **...But College Graduates Say It's Been a Good Investment for Them.** Among the college graduates who took the general public survey, fully 86% say that college has been a good investment for them personally; just 6% say it hasn't; and 7% say they aren't sure. Likewise, among the 212 survey respondents who are currently enrolled in college, 84% say they expect that the investment they and their family are making will prove to be a good one for them personally.
- **Growing Concerns about Affordability.** Three-quarters of the public say most people cannot afford to pay for a college education. In 1985, just six-in-ten Americans felt this way.¹ A slight majority of college presidents—57%—agree that the cost of college today is such that most people are unable to afford it.

How Student Debt Affects Borrowers

% of student borrowers who say having to pay back student loans had this impact on them



Note: Based on those who took out loans for postsecondary education and are not currently enrolled in school, n=332.

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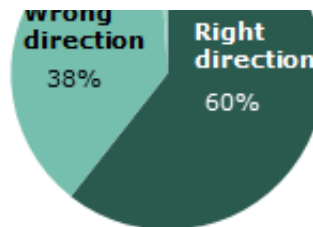
- **The Burdens of Student Debt.** Among all survey respondents who took out college loans and are no longer in school, about half (48%) say that paying back the loan has made it harder to make ends meet; 25% say it has made it harder to buy a home; 24% say it has had an impact on the kind of career they are pursuing; and 7% say it has delayed their getting married or starting a family.

Quality and Direction

Right Direction or Not?

Share of college presidents who say higher education in U.S. is headed in the ...





Note: "No answer" responses are shown but not labeled.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER P/1

Mixed Views about the Direction of Higher Education. Six-in-ten college presidents (60%) say the system of higher education in the United States is going in the right direction, but a substantial minority—38%—say it's headed in the wrong direction. Also, just 9% of college presidents say the higher education system is doing an excellent job of providing academic programs that meet the needs of today's economy; 67% say it is doing a good job; 22% say only fair; and 1% say poor.

College Presidents: We're Not Number One

%

How does the quality of the higher education system in the U.S. rate in the world?



...and where do you think it will rate in 10 years?



Note: "No answer" responses not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER P/4-5

- **We're Not Number One.** Just 19% of college presidents say the higher education system in the United States is the best in the world; an additional 51% say it is one of the best. When asked to look ahead, just 7% say they expect the U.S. system of higher education to be the best in the world 10 years from now, and 46% say it will be one of the best. Attitudes on these questions differ by the selectivity level of the respondents' institution. Among presidents of highly selective colleges or universities, fully 40% say that the U.S. system of higher education is the best in the world, compared with 22% of heads of institutions of medium selectivity and 14% of heads of institutions of lower selectivity.²

College Presidents: We're Not Number One

%

How does the quality of the higher education system in the U.S. rate in the world?



...and where do you think it will rate in 10 years?



Note: "No answer" responses not shown.

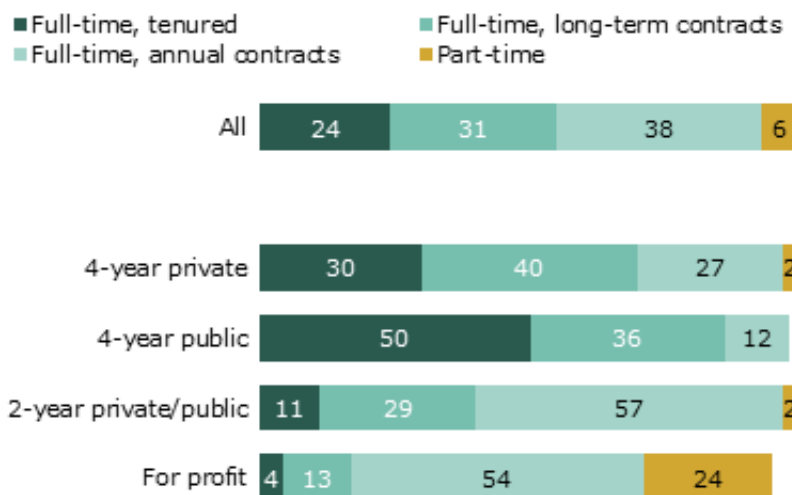
PEW RESEARCH CENTER P/4-5

College Presidents See Declining Student Quality. About six-in-ten college presidents (58%) say high schools are doing a worse job now than 10 years ago in preparing students for college; just 6% say they are doing a better job. Also, 52% of college presidents say college students study less now than they did 10 years ago; just 7% say they study more.

- **About All those A's.** Some 27% of college presidents say that, at their own institution, the faculty grades students too leniently; 1% say they grade too stringently; and 73% say they grade students about right.
- **Doubts about President Obama's College Completion Goals.** Nearly two-thirds (64%) of college presidents say it is unlikely that, by 2020, the U.S. will achieve the goal set by President Obama to have the highest share of young adults with a college degree or certificate of any country in the world.

Ideal Faculty

If given the choice, which of the following would you prefer make up most of the faculty at your institution? (%)



Note: Percentage of 4-year public college presidents choosing "part-time" was less than 1%. "No answer" responses not shown.

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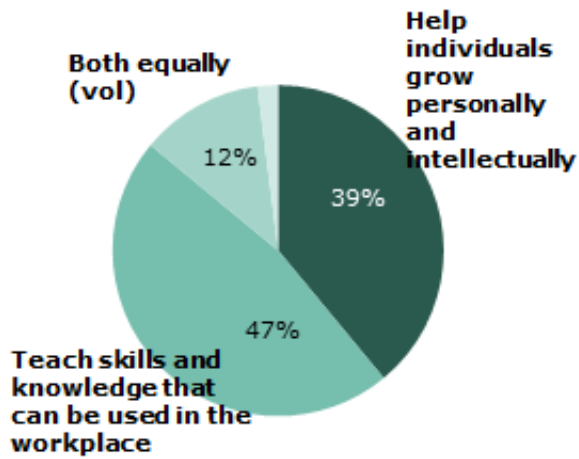
- **Not Much Support for Faculty Tenure.** The long-standing academic tradition of faculty tenure (lifetime job security as a means of ensuring academic freedom) doesn't get much in the way of a vote of confidence from college presidents. Only one-quarter (24%) say that, if given a choice, they would prefer that most faculty members at their institution be tenured. About seven-in-ten say they would prefer that most faculty members be on either annual (38%) or long-term (31%) contracts. Tenure is more popular among heads of public four-year institutions (50% say it is their preferred option for most faculty members) than among heads of private four-year institutions (30%). There is very little support for tenure among heads of public two-year colleges (11%) or for-profit colleges (4%).
- **Heads of For-Profit Colleges the Most Downbeat.** The for-profit sector of the higher education system has been growing rapidly in recent years, and its leaders have a downbeat point of view on many issues covered in the survey. A majority of them, compared with a minority of other college presidents, say the U.S. higher education system is heading in the wrong direction and that colleges offer less value for the money spent than they did 10 years ago. They are more likely than other presidents to say public high schools are doing a worse job of preparing students for college now than they did 10 years ago. Also, heads of for-profit schools are more likely than other presidents to endorse a workplace-related mission for higher education, rather than a goal of promoting intellectual growth or responsible citizenship.

Mission and Role

Main Purpose of College?

% saying ...

- **Public Has Split Views about Mission of Higher Education.** By a small but statistically significant margin, the public says that the main purpose of a



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses are shown but not labeled.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/20

college education should be to teach work-related skills and knowledge (47%) rather than to help an individual grow personally and intellectually (39%). An additional 12% volunteer that these missions are of equal importance. College graduates tend to place more emphasis on personal and intellectual growth (52%) over career preparation (35%), while those who are not college graduates lean the other way, emphasizing career preparation (51%) over personal growth (34%).

How Useful Was College For You?

% of college graduates saying college was very/fairly useful in ...

| | Very useful | Fairly useful | Net |
|---|-------------|---------------|-----|
| Increasing knowledge and helping you to grow intellectually | 74 | 22 | 96 |
| Helping you grow and mature as a person | 69 | 24 | 93 |
| Preparing you for a job or career | 55 | 33 | 88 |

Notes: Based on four-year college graduates, n=757.

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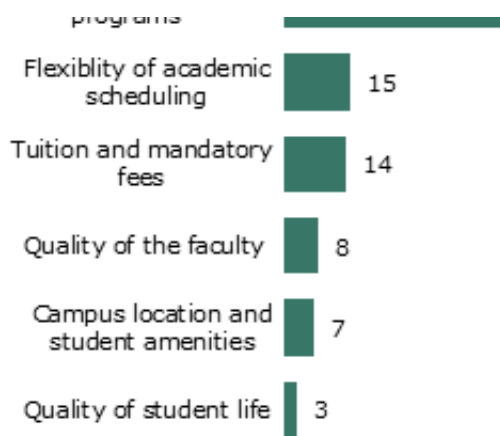
- **Most Graduates Say College Was Very Useful on Key Goals.** Among college graduates in the survey, 74% say their college education was very useful in helping them increase their knowledge and grow intellectually; 69% say it was very useful in helping them grow and mature as a person; and 55% say it was very useful in helping them prepare for a job or career.
- **Presidents See Multiple Missions for College...** College presidents are evenly divided about the main role colleges play in the lives of their students; about half (51%) say it is to help them grow intellectually and mature as a person; while 48% say it is to provide skills, knowledge and training to help them succeed in the working world. These views differ by institution type. Seven-in-ten heads of four-year public and private colleges emphasize intellectual and personal growth, while about two-thirds of the heads of two-year and for-profit colleges emphasize career preparation. When asked about the most important roles that colleges play in the broader society, the presidents cite preparing students to become productive members of the workforce (40%) and responsible citizens (28%), and to ensure that all qualified students have equal access to a college education (21%).

How Colleges Attract Students

Which one would you say is the most important factor as your institution competes with other institutions to attract students? (%)

Strength of the academic programs 50

- **...And Say Academic Programs Are the Key to Attracting Students.** When asked to name the most important factor in their competition with other institutions to attract students, 50% of presidents say it is the strength of their academic programs, far ahead of other factors such as flexibility of academic scheduling (15%); tuition and fees (14%); quality of



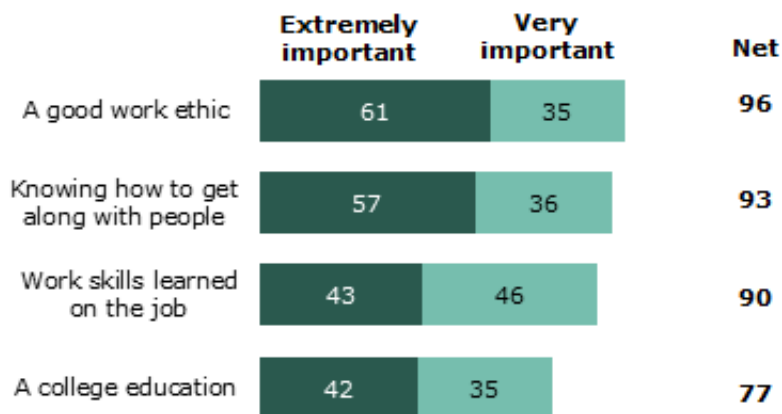
the faculty (8%); campus location and student amenities (7%); and quality of student life (3%).

Note: Results are based on combined responses of Q.37 and Q.38 in the college presidents' survey (P), which incorporate those who pick only one item as "very important" in Q.37a-g into Q.38.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER P/37-38

What it Takes for a Young Person to Succeed in Life

% saying extremely/very important...



Notes: "Net" percentages may not match the sum of individual percentages due to rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/12

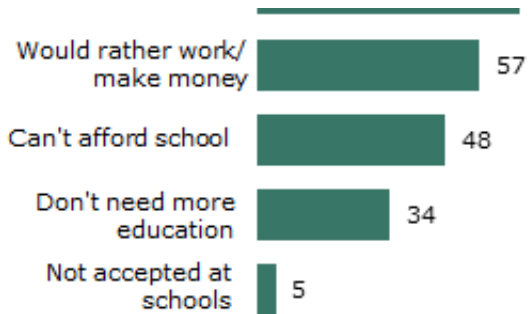
- **For Most of Public, Character Trumps College.** Respondents to the public survey were asked to assess how important four different character traits or personal experiences are to a young person's success in life. Nearly all (96%) say a good work ethic is extremely or very important; 93% say that about knowing how to get along with people; and 90% say that about work skills learned on the job. Just 77% say that a college education is extremely or very important. Looking at the demographic patterns in these responses, blacks in general—and black women in particular—are more likely than other groups to see a college education as extremely important to success in life.
- **Nearly All Parents Expect their Child to Go to College...** Fully 94% of survey respondents who have at least one child under age 18 say they expect that child to attend college. Just over half (53%) of these parents say they're saving to pay for their child's education, though of this group, about half say they're not saving enough.

Reasons for Not Going to College

% saying this applies to them



- **... But Most Young Adults Don't, Typically for Financial Reasons.** Even with the steady rise in recent decades in college enrollment levels, the majority of young adults in this country do not attend a four-year college.³ And the main reasons,



Note: Based on adults ages 18-34 who do not have a four-year college degree and are not currently enrolled in school, n=311.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER GP/13

according to the Pew Research survey, are financial. Among survey respondents ages 18 to 34 who do not have a bachelor's degree and aren't currently enrolled in school, fully two-thirds say that a major reason they did not continue their education is their need to support their family. Some 57% say they would rather work and make money, and 48% say they can't afford a college education. One-third (34%) say they don't feel they needed more education, and just 5% say they didn't continue because they weren't accepted at the school they wanted to attend.

About the Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows: Chapter 2 provides a look at long-term trends on college enrollment, cost and student debt, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Education and other official sources. Chapter 3 provides a detailed look at the findings of the Pew Research survey of the general public. Chapter 4 provides a detailed look at findings from the Pew Research/Chronicle of Higher Education survey of college presidents. Chapter 5 provides a Pew Research estimate of the lifetime "payoff" of a college education that weighs the cost and foregone earnings a student incurs while in college against the added earning power that comes with a college degree.

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Released: May 15, 2011

College Presidents, Public Assess, Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education

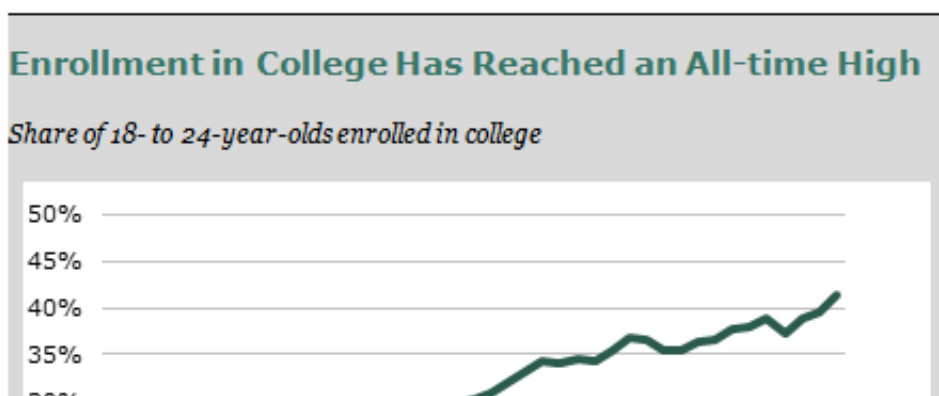
By *Paul Taylor, Kim Parker, Richard Fry, D'Vera Cohn, Wendy Wang, Gabriel Velasco and Daniel Dockterman*

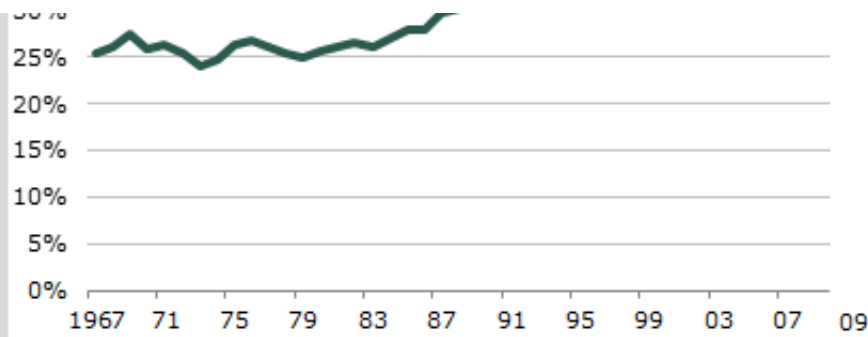
Chapter 2: Trends in College Enrollment, Completion, Cost and Debt

This section highlights key trends in college enrollment, attainment of college degrees, college expenses and student debt levels. It is based on data from government sources and the College Board, a not-for-profit membership organization of colleges, universities and other educational entities.

College Enrollment

In recent decades, a steadily growing share of young adults have enrolled in college. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, about one-quarter of 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in college at any given moment. By 2009, more than 40% of that age group were enrolled in college, the highest level ever recorded. Young females are more likely to be enrolled in college than young males. Young whites are more likely to be enrolled in college than their black and Hispanic peers, but college enrollment has increased for all racial and ethnic groups.



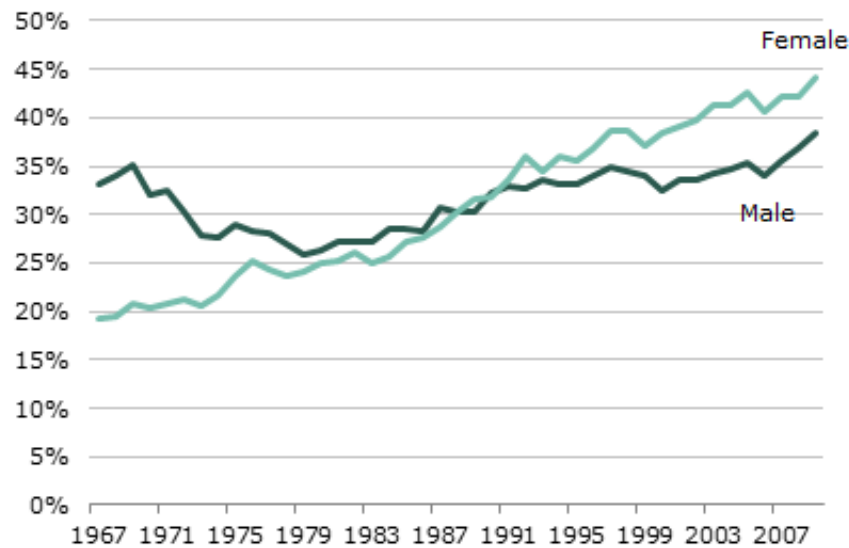


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 2010*, Table 212

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The Growth in Female Enrollment Has Outpaced the Growth in Male Enrollment

Share of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college

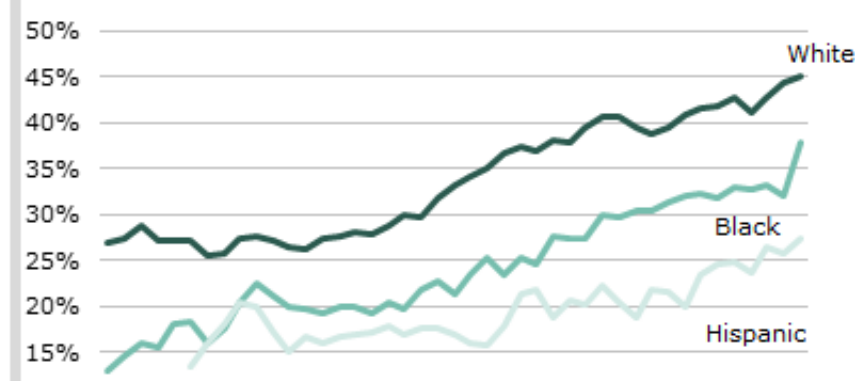


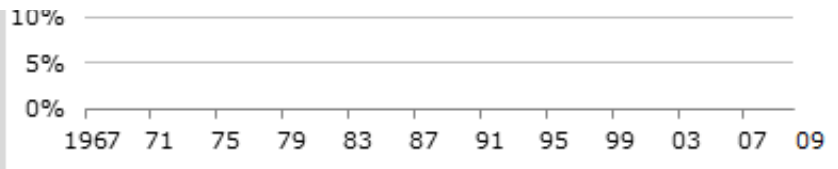
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 2010*, Table 212

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Minority College Enrollment Has Increased but Still Trails White College Enrollment

Share of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college





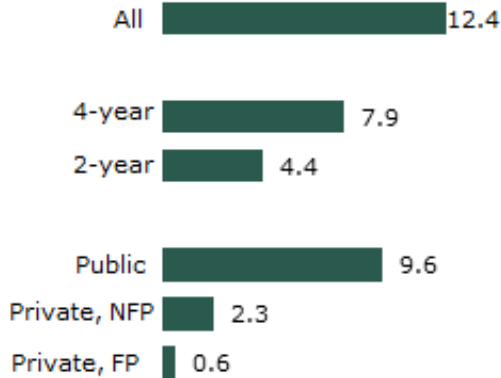
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 2010*, Table 212

Notes: Prior to 1972, white and black rates include persons of Hispanic origin. After 2002, white and black rates exclude persons of multiracial origin.

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College Enrollment of Students Younger than 25, 2009

(in millions)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 2010*, Table 201

Notes: Figures reflect total fall enrollment in degree-granting institutions. "NFP" is not for profit; "FP" is for profit.

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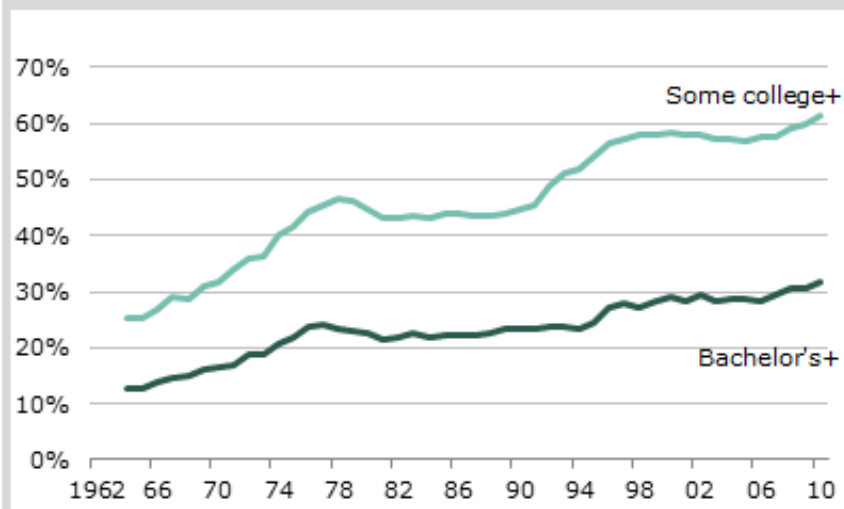
In the fall of 2009, 12.4 million students younger than age 25 were enrolled in the nation's colleges and universities. About two-thirds attended four-year institutions, and most (77%) attended public colleges and universities.

College Completion

In 2010, more than 60% of 25- to 29-year-olds had finished at least some college education (at a two-year or four-year institution), an increase from about 25% in the early 1960s. In 2010, 32% of 25- to 29-year-olds completed at least a bachelor's degree (up from 13% in 1962) and an additional 9% had an associate degree as their highest degree completed. More young women (36%) than men (28%) complete at least a bachelor's degree, and young whites (39%) continue to be more likely than young blacks (19%) or Hispanics (13%) to have at least a bachelor's degree.

A Growing Share of Young Adults are College Graduates

College attainment of 25- to 29-year-olds



Source: March Current Population Survey (CPS) Integrated Public Use Micro Sample

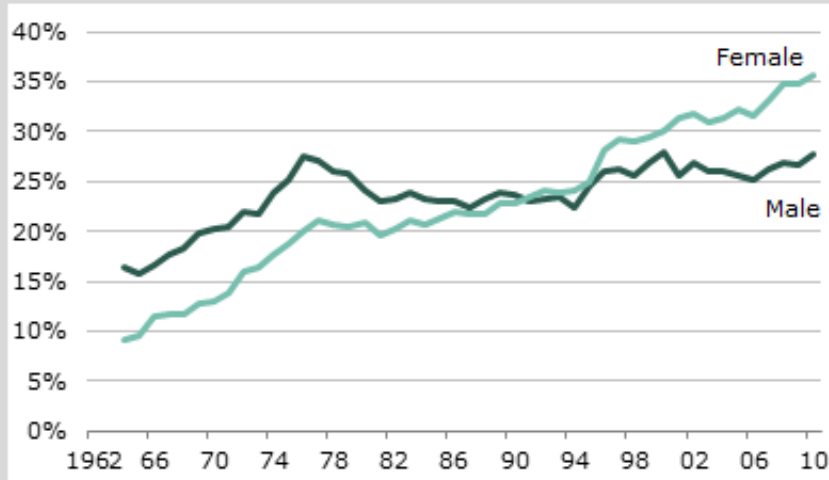
Notes: Prior to 1992, persons with at least a bachelor's degree refers to those with four or more years of college. Before 1992, persons with at least some college refers to those who completed at least one year of college.

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Young Female College Completion Has Outpaced

Young Male College Completion

Attainment of at least a bachelor's degree among 25- to 29-year-olds



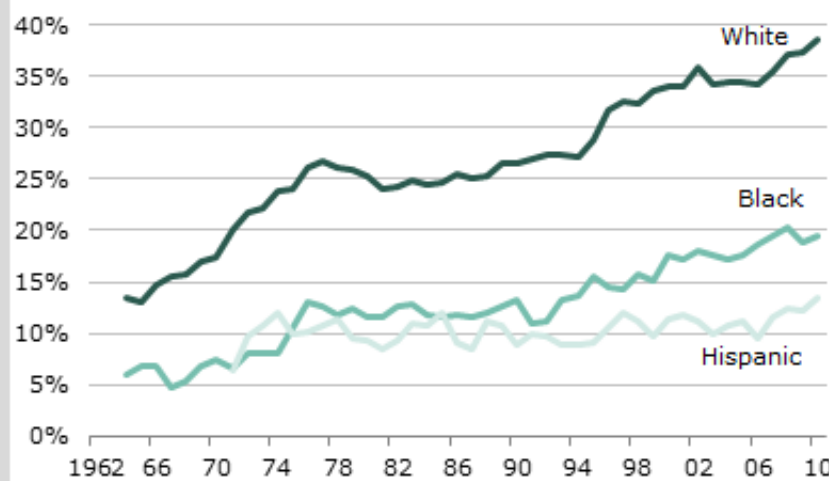
Source: March Current Population Survey (CPS) Integrated Public Use Micro Sample

Notes: Prior to 1992, persons with at least a bachelor's degree refers to those with four or more years of college.

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Minority College Completion Continues to Lag behind White College Completion

Attainment of at least a bachelor's degree among 25- to 29-year-olds



Source: March Current Population Survey (CPS) Integrated Public Use Micro Sample

Notes: Prior to 1992, persons with at least a bachelor's degree refers to those with four or more years of college. Prior to 1971, white and black rates include persons of Hispanic origin. After 2002, white and black rates exclude persons of multiracial origin.

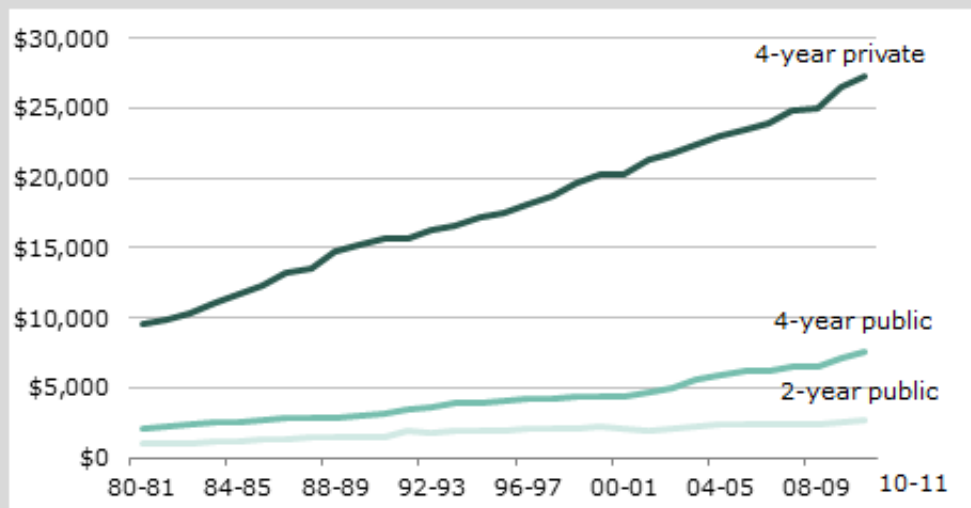
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College Expenses

Average stated tuition and fees have roughly tripled since 1980-81, even after accounting for inflation. In 2010-11, the typical in-state full-time undergraduate was charged \$7,605 in tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and universities (before grant aid), an increase from \$2,119 in 1980-81 (all figures adjusted to 2010 dollars). Other colleges and universities have increased tuition and fees by similar orders of magnitude. Average tuition and fees at private colleges and universities increased from \$9,535 in 1980-81 to \$27,293 in 2010-11.

Tuition and Fees Have Increased Since 1980-81

(all figures in 2010 \$)

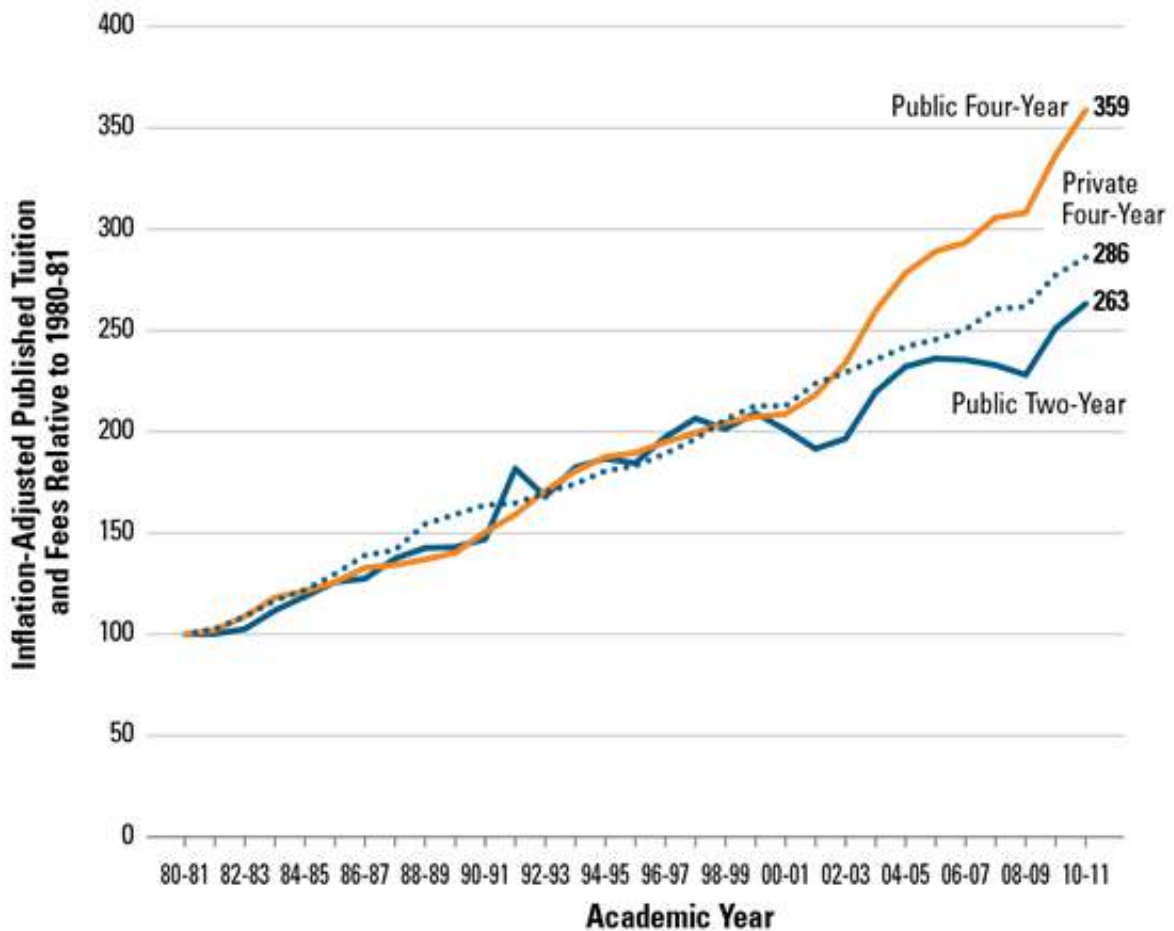


Source: Data underlying College Board's *Trends in College Pricing 2010* Figure 5

Notes: The amounts shown are the list or published tuition and fees, not what students actually pay. Most undergraduates receive grant aid. The amounts shown are the "sticker price" and do not account for grant aid. The College Board estimates them by weighting published tuition and fees by full-time undergraduate enrollment. They are deflated using the CPI.

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The Sticker Price of College Has Increased since 1980-81



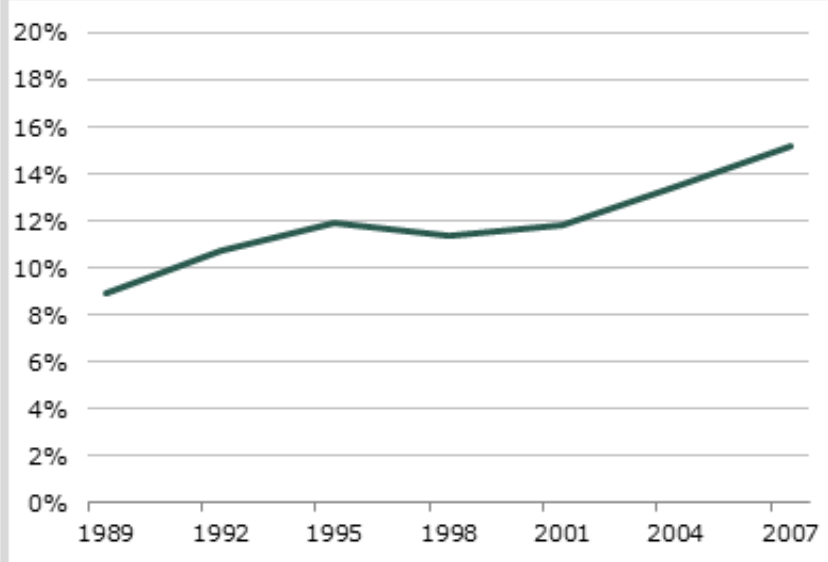
Source: The College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2010*, Figure 5.

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A growing share of undergraduates take out student loans, and a rising share of families have outstanding student loans they are paying back. In 2007, 15% of families had outstanding student loan obligations, up from 9% in 1989. The average balance was \$21,500 in 2007, up from \$8,700 in 1989 (all figures in 2007 dollars). Outstanding student loan debt is now about 5% of all outstanding debt in the household sector—more than double its share a decade ago.

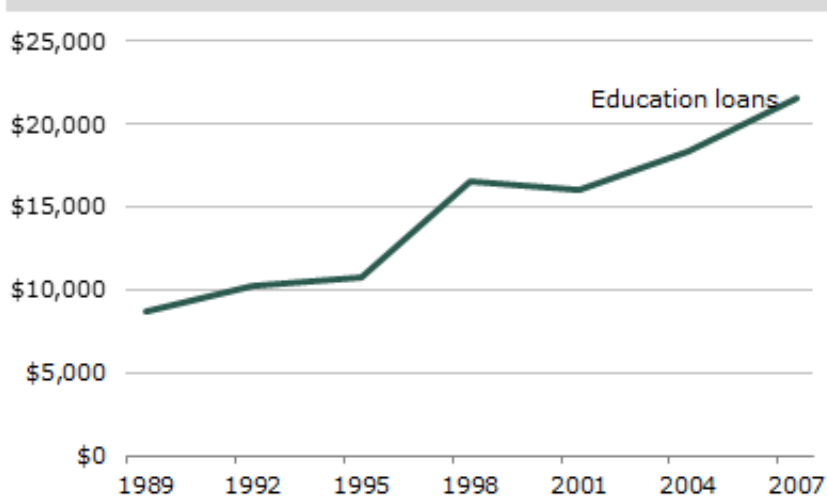
More Families Have Outstanding Student Loans

Share of families with student loans



... and the Average Amount Owed Has Increased

Amount owed per family for families with student loans (in 2007 \$)



Source: Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finance (SCF) Chartbook
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Total Household Debt Balance and Its Composition

Trillions of Dollars

Trillions of Dollars

15

15

■ Mortgage
 ■ HE Revolving
 ■ Auto Loan
 ■ Credit Card
 ■ Student Loan
 ■ Other

