Addressing Decline in Public Opinion of Higher Education

PLDI Cohort 2016-18
April 27, 2018
PreDoctoral Leadership Development Institute (PLDI)
Outline

1. Define the problem
2. Explore specific issues in depth
3. Recommend actions
Public is losing faith in higher ed

What Gallup Learned About Higher Education in 2017

Is Higher Education Really Losing the Public?
New public opinion data suggest that despite significant concerns about prices, most Americans (and many Republicans) now believe higher education is essential.

By Doug Lederman // December 15, 2017
26 COMMENTS

Why Republicans Don't Trust Higher Ed
New Gallup data show GOP attitudes about academe are based on views of campus politics. Would a broad-reaching plan to improve education help?

By Scott Jaschik // August 17, 2017
166 COMMENTS

Sharp Partisan Divisions in Views of National Institutions
Republicans increasingly say colleges have negative impact on U.S.

FOR RELEASE JULY 10, 2017

The World Might Be Better Off Without College for Everyone
Students don't seem to be getting much out of higher education.

THE CHRONICLE REVIEW
Higher Ed’s Dysfunctional Devotion to Meritocracy
Political divide in the views

Wide partisan differences over the impact of major institutions on the country

% who say each has a positive/negative effect on the way things are going in the country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Republican/Lean Rep</th>
<th>Democrat/Lean Dem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Churches, religious orgs.</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks/Financial institutions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor unions</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national news media</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges and universities</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since 2015, Republicans’ views of the impact of colleges have turned much more negative

% who say colleges and universities have a ___ effect on the way things are going in the country

Note: Don’t know responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 8-18, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
“How much confidence do you, yourself, have in colleges and universities?”

Gallup poll - Aug 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education is essential to the country</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are well-trained/educated</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. colleges maintain high standard</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better job opportunities</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare students for real life and success</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches open-mindedness</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good professors/instructors/administrators</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gallup poll - Aug 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too expensive</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too liberal/Too political</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push their own agenda</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach wrong stuff</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor leadership/bad policies</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to find employment after college</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality is declining</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much focus on sports</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Education beyond high school is important”

86% agree: “It is easier to get a good job with an education after high school – like a college degree or a trade certificate”

89% agree: “Most high school students should pursue career or technical training, community college programs and associate degree programs, or a four-year college degree after they graduate high school”
### Terminology matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Community colleges</th>
<th>Post-secondary education</th>
<th>Colleges and Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A great deal</strong></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quite a lot</strong></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Some</strong></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very little</strong></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gallup poll - Jan 2018
Disconnect between public and higher-ed leaders

Only 13% of college and university presidents agree that most Americans have an accurate view of the purpose of higher education.

(Inside Higher Ed, 2018)
WE MUST ACT!
Costs

Understanding changes in costs
Cost

Too expensive

Aug. 2017 Gallup Poll:

- 36% of Democrats
- 11% of Republicans

Had low confidence in college because it was “too expensive”

What makes college so expensive?

Why is there decreased support for colleges?

Solutions?
Costs: challenges of the current generation

US CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI)

SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS
Tuitions rise, salaries don't
Percentage change since 1987, adjusted for inflation

- Early Career Salary
- Minimum Wage
- Private University
- Public University

Source: National Center for Education Statistics; National Association of Colleges and Employers; U.S. Department of Labor
Costs: challenges of the current generation

Figure 2: Revenue for Public Colleges, by Source, Fiscal Years 2003 through 2012

Percentage of total revenue

Tuition
Local
State
Federal
Other sources

Source: GAO analysis of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Finance component data. | GAO-15-151
Costs: challenges of the current generation

**Perceived Lack of Transparency**
- Bloated payscale
- School partnerships with financial institutions
- Keeping university investments secrets

- Financial aid, resource, awards
- Perceptions of student actions as university actions
- Athletics spending – lack of info about non-athletic benefits
Costs: challenges of the current generation

**Big & costly decisions**
- Costly integration
- Costly membership

**Increased college costs**
- Increased tuition = increased student debt
- Diminished academic opportunities & student services
$1.48 Trillion

In student debt
Economic Effects of Student Debt

Decrease in Home Ownership under age 35

May affect retirement age
Student debt realities vs. myths

• The price of student debt may outweigh the cost of not getting a college degree at all - education is an investment

• Student loans can be manageable, if approached wisely

• Government Loan forgiveness programs available to veterans, those in public service, teachers, non-profit workers, employees of select government agencies

• There are ways to make repayments more feasible - longer loan repayment time, income specific loan repayment plans
Solutions: student-centered approaches

Given that student debt can be a burden for students, we propose several solutions:

• Increase financial literacy concerning student debt— make it a mandatory one-day training course in high schools and continue this initiative in college
• Encourage students to consider high quality state schools with in-state tuition
• Reduce the costs of additional materials, such as textbooks, by offering affordable textbook programs or making materials available online--e-books
Solutions: government, corporations and universities take the lead

• Lower student debt interest rates, too high at an average of 4.5% (undergraduate), should be at most 1-2%, not profit driven

• Public private partnerships— encourage corporations to create matching programs to stimulate efficient and effective repaying of student loans

• Increase funding for state universities: making them, if possible, less expensive for families making less than $100,000— New York State, San Francisco City college model, also Tennessee model
Expectations

Understanding expectations and realities
Economic Structures of Expectations

- Complex job demands
- Unrealistic employer expectations
- Shifting/emerging industries
- Outsourcing of training
- US higher ed as a job-training system
Cognitive Gaps in Expectations

Economic structure vs. Human skills

- Needed
- Taught
- Sought
- Gained
Career Readiness

-- National Association for Colleges and Employers

- Critical thinking/problem solving
- Oral/written communications
- Teamwork/collaboration
- Digital technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism/work ethic
- Career management
- Global/intercultural fluency
Gained

Employer vs. Student Perception of Proficiency in Career Readiness Competencies (% of Respondents)

Source: Job Outlook 2018 (N=201 employing organizations) and The Class of 2017 Student Survey Report (N=4,213 graduating seniors), National Association for Colleges and Employers
Disparity among Millennials Ages 25-32 By Education Level in Terms of Annual Earnings ...

(median among full-time workers, in 2012 dollars)

- Bachelor's degree or more: $45,500
- Two-year degree/Some college: $30,000
- High school graduate: $28,000

Unemployment Rate ...

- Bachelor's degree or more: 3.8
- Two-year degree/Some college: 8.1
- High school graduate: 12.2

And Share Living in Poverty ...

- Bachelor's degree or more: 5.8
- Two-year degree/Some college: 14.7
- High school graduate: 21.8

Education and Views About Work

% of employed adults ages 25 to 32 with each level of education saying ...

- They are "very satisfied" with current job:
  - Bachelor's degree or more: 53
  - Two-year degree/Some college: 37
  - High school grad or less: 36

- They have a career/career-track job:
  - Bachelor's degree or more: 86
  - Two-year degree/Some college: 73
  - High school grad or less: 57

- They have enough education and training to get ahead in their job:
  - Bachelor's degree or more: 63
  - Two-year degree/Some college: 55
  - High school grad or less: 41

- Their education was "very useful" in preparing them for a job or career:
  - Bachelor's degree or more: 46
  - Two-year degree/Some college: 43
  - High school grad or less: 31

Notes: Based on currently employed 25- to 32-year-olds (n=509).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q34, 28, 2c, 20
Political Leanings of U.S. Faculty in Higher Education

- 72% liberal
- 15% conservative

— Howard Kurtz, Washington Post

- Community college
  - 37.1% liberal
  - 19% conservative

- Liberal arts colleges
  - 61% liberal
  - 3.9% conservative
The Liberal Bias Problem

Higher-ed leans left
- Result of the nature of research
- Imbalances exist elsewhere

This is a perception problem
- The liberal bias doesn’t “indoctrinate” students
- Uncomfortable: 8% liberals, 21% republicans

Echo chamber/Ivory tower
- Ideas go unchallenged
- Hostility towards dissenting opinions
Solutions to the Liberal Bias

**Curriculum**
- Teaching students
  - Rhetoric and debate
- Training faculty
  - Class facilitation

**Leadership**
- Acknowledging implicit liberal bias
- University funded partnerships between liberals and conservatives

**Collective efforts between institutions**
- Offices of news and media relations
- Offices of community affairs
Freedom of Speech

Practices & Policies
The Freedom of Speech Problems

**Hypocrisy**
Universities purport to encourage a free exchange of ideas but are seen as dismissive of differing, often conservative opinions.

**Outdated policies**
Universities have not updated free speech policies and practices to account for new media and technologies (like the Internet), or for our current political climate.

**Perception**
Despite these problems, the suppression of free speech on college campuses is largely a perception problem.
Figure 1. Ideology and comfort with expression

I feel comfortable sharing my own ideas and opinions

Note: Students who were “not sure” of their ideology are not represented in the figure.
Figure 2. Student reactions to guest speakers with whom they strongly disagree

If a guest speaker with ideas and opinions I strongly disagree with were invited to my college campus, I might:

- Attend the guest speaker's event
- Voice my views during the question and answer part of the event
- Attend an alternative event or go to a safe space
- Boycott the speaker's event
- Write an opinion piece for the student paper about the speaker's views
- Attend a protest or rally against the speaker's ideas
- Take down flyers for the event
- Try to prevent other students from attending the event
- Make noise during the speaker's event so he/she can't be heard
- Use violent or disruptive actions to prevent the event from occurring

Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) - Survey of Students, October 2017
FAQS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Below is a series of questions and answers related to free speech on campus, the First Amendment, the rights of student groups and controversial speakers, and UF's commitment to community safety.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgement</th>
<th>Update Policies</th>
<th>Marketable Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities need to acknowledge that there is a free speech problem on campuses</td>
<td>Universities need new policies to govern free speech on campus; these policies should be made part of orientation programs and should be publicized</td>
<td>New strategies should be designed with an eye toward changing perception; these strategies should utilize the classroom, and incorporate humanities curricula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Reframing

How to tell our own story, proactively
FRAMING is a process of building a narrative of deciding which facts to highlight and make salient to an audience.

Higher Education suffers from negative framing in media:
- Academics are out of touch with the average American.
- It costs too much to go to college.

Liberal professors indoctrinate students.
- Colleges don’t teach enough practical skills.
- College students are easily triggered snowflakes.
On Framing, and Positively Reframing

We must reframe higher education by building a more positive narrative that highlight benefits.

We must reframe higher education by proactively telling our own story, on our own terms.

What story do we want to tell?

Higher education helps to make America a global leader, but also benefits the average American.
We must learn from industries that do this better.
American higher education is THE BEST in the world

“No nation in the world offers as much choice to potential undergraduates, graduates, researchers, and faculty” (Goldin & Katz, 2008)

U.S. colleges and universities define the highest standards of excellence on the global stage

American institutions represented 48 of the top 100 universities in the Academic Ranking of World Universities in 2017.

Among the researchers with Ph.Ds. earned after 1955, 48 percent of the science Nobel Prize winners hailed from America.
America is globally competitive because of what its higher education system produces:

- Generates new knowledge
- Laboratory discoveries
- Produces a capable workforce

US remains the Mecca for attracting international students:

2009-10: international undergraduate students contributed $18 billion to the US economy

After graduating with degrees from the US, foreign-born entrepreneurs founded 50% of the engineering and tech companies in Silicon Valley from 1995-2005.

Nationwide, they produced $52 billion in sales and employing 450,000 workers in 2005.
“95% of the people we want to sell something to live somewhere else, and America’s access to and leadership in foreign markets is critical.”

Thomas J. Donohue President and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Global leaders are essential for economic success

America must remain globally competitive to create jobs

U.S. exports support more than 10 million jobs in the United States

American academic institutions possess competitive advantages

They develop global leaders capable of operating effectively anywhere in the world
Higher ed is an economic force multiplier

**FIGURE D**

**Median wages are substantially higher in states with better-educated workers**

*Relationship between state median hourly wage and share of state’s workforce with a bachelor’s degree or more education, 2012*

Source: Authors’ analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS) basic monthly and CPS Outgoing Rotation Group microdata

https://www.epi.org/publication/states-education-productivity-growth-foundations/
More than just wages

- Raise median wages/produce more state taxes
- Decrease state expenditures elsewhere
- 200-300% ROI on state money
- Help recession-proof their state
- Draw in private investment
Amazon Chooses 20 Finalists for Second Headquarters

By NICK WINGFIELD  JAN. 18, 2018

In choosing the location for HQ2, Amazon has a preference for:

- Metropolitan areas with more than one million people
- A stable and business-friendly environment
- Urban or suburban locations with the potential to attract and retain strong technical talent
- Communities that think big and creatively when considering locations and real estate options

-Arizon RFP.  
https://www.epi.org/publication/states-education-productivity-growth-foundations/
Benefits of Higher Education for the individual: Median Earnings

**Figure 2.1** Median Earnings and Tax Payments of Full-Time Year-Round Workers Age 25 and Older, by Education Level, 2015

- **Professional Degree (2%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $28,900
  - After-Tax Income: $82,000
  - Total: $110,900

- **Doctoral Degree (2%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $25,600
  - After-Tax Income: $74,500
  - Total: $100,100

- **Master's Degree (11%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $18,400
  - After-Tax Income: $56,800
  - Total: $75,200

- **Bachelor's Degree (25%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $14,500
  - After-Tax Income: $46,900
  - Total: $61,400

- **Associate Degree (11%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $10,100
  - After-Tax Income: $35,900
  - Total: $46,000

- **Some College, No Degree (16%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $8,900
  - After-Tax Income: $32,800
  - Total: $41,700

- **High School Diploma (26%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $7,600
  - After-Tax Income: $29,200
  - Total: $36,800

- **Less than a High School Diploma (7%)**
  - Estimated Taxes: $5,200
  - After-Tax Income: $22,000
  - Total: $27,200
Benefits of Higher Education for the individual: Social Mobility

**FIGURE 2.15** Employment Income Quartile in 2011 by Parents’ Income and Student’s Education Level, High School Sophomores of 2002
Example of a public education success story

Mike Emanuel

Emanuel received a B.A. in communications from Rutgers University where he worked as a play-by-play radio announcer for Rutgers athletics on WRSU-FM (88.7 FM).
Benefits of Higher Education for the Individual: Other Benefits

Health Related Benefits

Education and the Economic Benefits of Marriage

**FIGURE 2.18** Smoking Rates Among Individuals Age 26 and Older, by Gender and Education Level, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Unmarried</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Unmarried</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
<th>Unmarried</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>$40,703</td>
<td>$50,240</td>
<td>$38,077</td>
<td>$47,814</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>$573,169</td>
<td>$75,498</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>$46,201</td>
<td>$57,684</td>
<td>$42,491</td>
<td>$53,991</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>$571,586</td>
<td>$82,082</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$51,139</td>
<td>$65,090</td>
<td>$45,360</td>
<td>$58,061</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>$586,403</td>
<td>$99,101</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$55,181</td>
<td>$73,376</td>
<td>$48,875</td>
<td>$63,627</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>$589,744</td>
<td>$110,411</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$54,470</td>
<td>$76,652</td>
<td>$48,145</td>
<td>$64,504</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>$589,025</td>
<td>$112,076</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Income adjusted for household size and then scaled to reflect a three-person household.
Source: Decennial Censuses and 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) Integrated Public Use Micro Samples (IPUMS)
Conclusion
We Have a Problem
Declining public perception in higher education is a problem.
## Cost & Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rising Costs</th>
<th>Student Debt</th>
<th>Misaligned Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>◦ Costs are rising</td>
<td>◦ Students are paying the price</td>
<td>◦ Employers, students, higher ed leaders have different perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Support is declining</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Liberal Bias & Free Speech

Liberal Bias
- High prevalence of liberal professors and graduate students

Freedom of Speech
- Exchange of ideas is a fundamental tenet of education
- High profile controversies of disinviting speakers

Perception problem?
- Conservatives are only somewhat less comfortable than liberal students
Positive Reframing

Need for Reframing
- Tell our own story without engaging in negative discourse

Benefits of Higher Ed
- Global leadership for U.S.
- Economic and social benefits for states and individuals
# Recommendations

#1 Acknowledge Problems

#2 Narrative Shift and Positive Reframe

#3 Change What We Do
## Change What We Do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Education/Skills</th>
<th>Policies/Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address liberal bias</td>
<td>Offer workplace skills</td>
<td>Free speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/ respect for ideas</td>
<td>Demonstrate utility of current practices</td>
<td>Hate speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student debt/burden to families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thanks!

Questions?