Busting Myths About the Cost & Value of Higher Ed with Data

CIMA-AAG Town Hall | February 2, 2024
Presenters

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APLU, CIMA Lead

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NACUBO, AAG Lead
Today’s Goals

1. Share 2 data tools available through APLU and NACUBO
2. Gather feedback for the tools
3. Provide space for participants to
   a. Share challenges re: using data to communicate cost & value
   b. Discuss how the CIMA-AAG town hall series can help address the challenges
NACUBO4.CNF.IO

- Navigate to https://nacubo4.cnf.io/ and tap the session titled "Busting Myths About Cost & Value of Higher Ed with Data"

- OR just point your phone’s camera at the QR code to join directly
What are some higher ed cost/price myths that data could help dispel?

- True cost
- That tuition keeps going up every year everywhere.
- Unbearable debt
- Student debt exceeds earning potential
- Lack of understanding of the connection between legislative funding and increased tuition

- Lack of ROI on attaining a degree.
- Cost of attendance vs. tuition and fees
- Public vs private
- Debt levels upon graduation
- Can make more learning a trade
- Which costs that universities control (tuition vs off-

- Sticker price does not equal actual price
- We offer great value -- Every school does not cost as much as Harvard.
- Hidden costs
- Lack of degree alignment with career demands

- Most students graduate with a lot of debt.
- ROI on
- Cost after financial aid
- Salaries for graduates compared to non graduates
- High percent of students change their major. Don’t know what they
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student debt exceeds earning potential</td>
<td>Debt levels upon graduation</td>
<td>Salaries for graduates compared to non graduates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of the connection between legislative funding and increased tuition.</td>
<td>Can make more learning a trade</td>
<td>High percent of students change their major. Don’t know what they want to do when 17 years old</td>
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<td>If students aren’t working in 12 months then college is not worth it</td>
<td>Which costs that universities control (tuition vs off-campus housing)</td>
<td>Institution spending on instruction vs other costs</td>
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<td>Lack of degree alignment with career demands</td>
<td>Quality of life-health, economic, and overall satisfaction improve with degreea</td>
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Public universities respond to the needs of communities and states they serve.

https://www.aplu.org/our-work/4-policy-and-advocacy/publicvalues/
More Is Possible With Higher Education

- More opportunities
- More prosperity
- More community benefits
- More support
- More work to be done
Colleges and Universities Serve Students in Many Ways

Financial Aid
Funding, counseling, processing

Instruction
Advising, lectures, guided labs

Technology
High-speed internet, cybersecurity

Student Services
Retention initiatives, health care access

Infrastructure
Construction, maintenance

Innovation
Laboratories, libraries, research centers

What Drives College Costs?
Individuals With College Degrees Have Greater Economic Stability

Share of adults who moved up from the lower-income tier or down from the upper-income tier, average of annual turnovers from 2000-2001 to 2020-2021

- Less than high school diploma
  - Moved up from lower-income tier: 21%
  - Moved down from upper-income tier: 60%
- High school graduate only
  - Moved up from lower-income tier: 33%
  - Moved down from upper-income tier: 53%
- Some college
  - Moved up from lower-income tier: 38%
  - Moved down from upper-income tier: 42%
- Bachelor’s degree +
  - Moved up from lower-income tier: 53%
  - Moved down from upper-income tier: 29%

Source: Rakesh Kochhar and Stella Sechopoulos, “Black and Hispanic Americans, Those with Less Education are More Likely to Fall Out of the Middle Class Each Year,” Pew Research Center, May 2022.
College Degree Holders Have Saved Significantly More Towards Retirement

Median value of family holdings of retirement accounts by educational attainment, nominal 2019 dollars

- College Degree: $119,000
- High School Diploma: $40,000
- Some College: $41,000

Over Their Lifetimes, Bachelor’s Degree Holders Make Significant Contributions to Their Communities

Average lifetime contributions of bachelor’s degree holders compared to an average wage earner with only a high school diploma

- More to their local economy: $278,000
- More in state and local taxes: $44,000
- More in annual charitable giving: $771

Source: “The Economic Impact of College Degrees,” College Possible, August 2018.
Before today, were you familiar with either of these resources?

- **44%** Nope
- **33%** I was familiar with at least one, but haven't used it/them in my work
- **22%** I'm familiar with at least one and have used it/them
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<th>What are some possibilities for using these resources?</th>
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<td>Aligning comms teams with consistent info</td>
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<td>Add to a library of data points for use in presidential communications.</td>
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<td>Communicate with parents</td>
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<td>To provide evidence for different arguments from different groups.</td>
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<td>Customizing for own area and institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consulting projects</td>
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<td>Advocacy</td>
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<td>Sharing with students and alumni</td>
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What do you see as the drawbacks, challenges, or issues with these tools?

They tend to answer it across all populations and what we need is — what do we do about addressing the 6%. Why is that population needing to take on so much debt and what can institutions so- or what are they all doing to address that?

They still need to be summarized quickly in a sentence or two in conversations and presentations.

access to some peer data or discipline specific data.

It's hard for the public to separate different segments of higher education.

The data is compelling However, it is not shared broadly enough or is not being

Impact of these trends are highly individualized ... macro-level data is hard for people to connect to their own experience.

Needs more promotion
BREAKOUT DISCUSSION
INTROS & GOALS

1. To share challenges in using data to communicate the cost and value of higher education
2. To brainstorm how future discussions can help to address these challenges
Find the slide with the Breakout Room number your group has been assigned. Make sure to only type on your group's slide!

As a group, discuss the prompt(s) and type your notes in the text box.

Add ❤️ to any ideas or thoughts that you agree with.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges in Using Data (Be specific: data gathering, interpretation, presentation, something else?)</th>
<th>Future Discussion Formats/Topics/Speakers to Address Challenges (Be creative: case studies, tool demos, guest speakers?)</th>
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<td>● Comms folks want to be bolder in rhetoric but quality of data doesn’t exist to enable this.</td>
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<td>● Caveats on data points make it challenging to communicate using data – shows the different perspective of comms vs data folks at institution</td>
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<td>● Institutions lack capacity to use data (e.g., time, skills)</td>
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<td>● Communicating value or cost across multiple institutions is difficult (lack of benchmarking data), especially given the various financial methodologies across different institutions. For example, how to get marketing cost for peers?</td>
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<td>● Lack of transparency around financial data can increase suspicions of data points. The way higher ed presents financial information is not helpful.</td>
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<td>● Variation in institutional boards, states, systems and those determine how data are presented</td>
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### Challenges in Using Data

*(Be specific: data gathering, interpretation, presentation, something else?)*

- Data on student outcomes are difficult to gather.
- National PSEO is incomplete.
- Difficult to income data from graduate.
- Reliant on self-reported data. (low response rates for alumni surveys).
- Legislators are resistant to data.

### Future Discussion Formats/Topics/Speakers to Address Challenges

*(Be creative: case studies, tool demos, guest speakers?)*

- Get speakers from states that have robust income data collection would be helpful. (Ex: CA Community Colleges). (Texas was the first to partner with the Census to get these data)
- Share some best practices on how to gather the data on student employment outcomes.
- Census (PSEO) gets tax records.
### Challenges in Using Data
*(Be specific: data gathering, interpretation, presentation, something else?)*

- What does the data tell you vs. what we can do about it in terms of crafting a narrative. What’s the narrative we pull from all of the data?
- Lack of trust in the data internal to the university and externally. +1
- Sounding defensive in the use of data
- Data gathering - hard to get reliable, clean data

### Future Discussion Formats/Topics/Speakers to Address Challenges
*(Be creative: case studies, tool demos, guest speakers?)*

- Who is the best messenger for delivering our data - external leaders – NGA?
- Student speakers for future events who have benefited from higher ed and realized its value.
- More compelling stories to get to the emotions rather than pure data. Let the data compliment the storytelling.
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<td>- Stopped using NACUBO tool—tool was preaching to the choir in the audiences she works on in her role—where you sit in the university affects how/who you’ll get these data points across</td>
<td>- Non monetary outcomes/ROI</td>
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<td>- Are we getting the data and info to the right audiences? Are CBOs the right folks? Should be focused on external audiences</td>
<td>- Where debt is coming from; frustration with how media portrays debt</td>
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<td>- Higher ed not willing to be honest of where debt coming from—online, grad, etc.</td>
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<td>- Our fight back on debt can’t just be “no it’s not”—need to be more clear about the debt</td>
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<td>- Is higher ed throwing ourselves under the bus?</td>
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<td>- Frustration with how headlines report tuition increases at institutions (e.g., 33% increase—but at some institutions that might only mean $1000 or other smallish amount)</td>
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<td>- Only folks listening to the data are the “choir”—how do we message for others?</td>
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<td>- Frustrated on focus of monetary outcomes of higher ed—what about other kinds of returns/societal good</td>
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## Challenges in Using Data

*Be specific: data gathering, interpretation, presentation, something else?*

- Dependent on the audience (e.g. students, parents)
- Lack of context (e.g. legislative influence)
- Marketing through student success data
- Interpretation of data becomes flimsy/contextualization can be challenging
- How to address noncompleters? What about folks who make as much as someone who did not go to college? Comes back to the point of how we address different audiences
- How do we capture the audience? Especially younger generations?

## Future Discussion Formats/Topics/Speakers to Address Challenges

*Be creative: case studies, tool demos, guest speakers?*

- More qualitative information
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Group Share Out
What do you think our next steps should be?

- Additional group meetings to continue the discussions
  - 3
- Get employment earnings data for institutions.
  - 3
- A concrete next step to engaging comms and marketing teams with the data groups on how to tell the story of the data we have
  - 3

- Tool demos would be great
  - 2
- More discussion where institutions can participate with a team.
  - 2
- More collaboration among higher ed associations to promote value of higher ed with political and community leaders
  - 2

- Distilling info and graphics into key messages and coordinating a comms plan across institutions nationwide
  - 2
- Templates to insert our own data into for a unified message across member institutions
  - 1
Coming Soon:
2nd Town Hall Invite!

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