

HEARING FROM OUR GRADS

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GENERAL BACKGROUND: COLLEGE SUCCESS

Lackluster college graduation rates –

- Fewer than 6 in 10 students who enroll in a 4 year college will earn a degree within 6 years
- Only 1 in 8 students who enroll in a 2 year college will successfully transfer and earn a bachelor's degree within 6 years

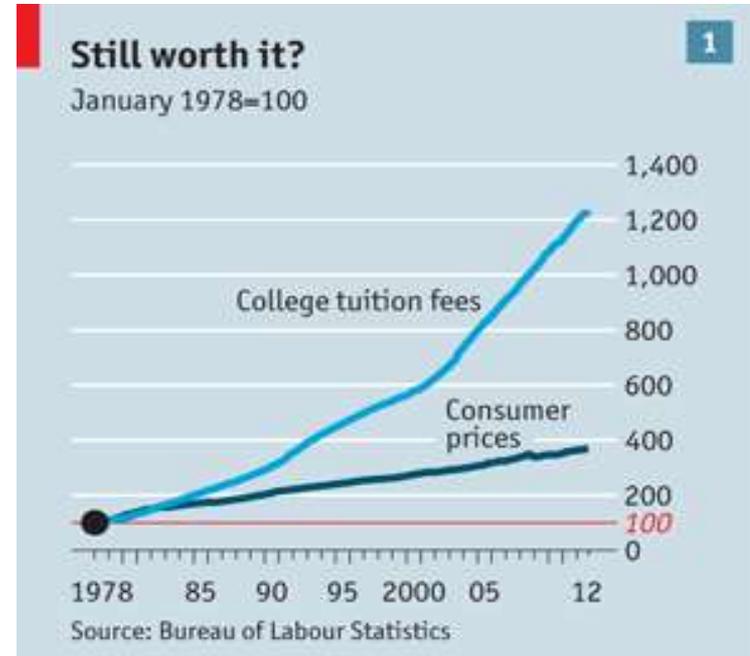
Significant disparities based on income & background –

- 90% of college freshman from top income quartile will earn degree within 6 years; Only 11% of college freshman from lowest quartile will earn degree within 6 years
 - Across all individuals in 18- to 24-year age range, 54% of students from wealthy families earn degrees; 9% of students from poor families earn degrees.
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GENERAL BACKGROUND

Significant cost and debt increases

- Tuition has risen at 5x the rate of inflation over the past 30 years
- Average student graduates with approx. \$30,000 in debt
- Nationally student debt in the U.S. exceeds \$1 trillion



Credit: The Economist, December 1, 2012

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Concerns about college learning

- 45% of students made no gains in critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and communication skills during their first 2 years of college
- 36% made no statistically significant gains across all 4 years
- “American higher education is characterized by limited or no learning for a large proportion of students” – Richard Arum & Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*

College continues to be primary driver of economic mobility & financial stability

- Average American adult with college degree earns 2x amount earned by average adult without a degree
 - Adults without a degree are 4x as likely to be unemployed
 - College graduates are happier, healthier, more likely to be married, be engaged parents, & contribute to their communities.
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THE STUDY

1st generation college students

68 participants

- Wide range of high school & college experiences

Narrative inquiry approach

- High school experiences
- College experiences
- Transition from high school to college
- Family, friends & community
- Goals and expectations

Peer interviewers



FINDINGS: UNIVERSAL STRENGTHS

- **Strong motivation to go to college**
- **Family encouragement**
- **Desire to “give back”**
 - “College was a definite for me. I think it has a lot to do with my parents not being able to go to school and knowing that I have so many siblings that are going to follow in my footsteps. To show them what success looks like is really important to me.”

FINDINGS: UNIVERSAL CHALLENGES

- **Poor Advising**

- “I just haven’t had anyone or met anyone on campus who I feel some kind of guidance from. I feel like I am on my own.”

- **Lack of Community**

- “In so many of my classes I feel like I’m just a number.”



FINDINGS: UNIVERSAL CHALLENGES

- **Uninspiring Teaching**

- “In college I feel like I’m sitting in a class and I’m learning about stuff that I don’t feel like I’m ever going to need.”
- “I feel like in college there’s a lot of lecture, lecture, lecture and you don’t really get anything out of it.”

- **Financial Stress**

- “I had to work two jobs and I would work you know 30 hours a week and go to school full time at the same time. I had no free time at all. That was really rough.”





DISAGGREGATED DATA
LINKED LEARNING SCHOOLS

FINDINGS: LL STRENGTHS

- **Higher Likelihood of Going to College**
- **Strong Community of Support**
 - “I’m not sure I would have made it to college, certainly not a four year college, if I hadn’t gone to my high school where the teachers really cared about me and really pushed me. When I would hear a teacher say that she was proud of me, and hearing her telling me that like she believed in me, it made me believe in myself and think that I could graduate from high school and go on to college.”

FINDINGS: LL STRENGTHS

- **Greater Individuality**
- **Prepared for Life After College**
 - “I think that my school has such a different way of teaching students that it really allows for them to kind of discover themselves and I believe that’s how education should be... As you are learning you are learning about yourself as well as the world around you.”
 - “The main purpose of my school was not really to prepare you for college but to prepare you for life.”

FINDINGS: LL CHALLENGES

- **Difficulty Transitioning to College**
- **Pedagogical Differences**
- **Care & Community**
 - “College professors go so fast with things that I can’t really retain the information as well as I guess some other students are used to because they went to high schools where they were used to having lectures every day.”
 - “In high school, like I said, the teachers really invested their time in you and really cared about you. So college was a hard transition. In my math class, specifically, the professor made it clear that she did not care whether I failed or I passed.”

“In high school I was so passionate and driven about anything that we were talking about in the classroom that I just naturally took on this position of being a leader... since coming to college I haven't seen that side of myself. I'm not involved in any extra-curriculars and there's not a lot of group work in my courses where I can go into the community and share what I'm learning. So definitely feel like sometimes, where has that side of me gone? The leadership side? Is she still there? Where can I find her? Because I miss her. I miss feeling like I could be a capable leader.”



**YOUTH VOICES:
IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

DISCUSS

- 1) **What aspects of the student experiences stood out for you? Why?**

- 2) **What are the implications...**
 - 1) For K-12 educators?
 - 2) For Linked Learning pathways?
 - 3) For colleges and universities?