



**TO:** Alex Payne, Arnold Ventures

**FROM:** Jon McHenry, Dan Judy, and Whit Ayres, North Star Opinion Research and Guy Molyneux, Livia Baer-Bositis, and Geoff Garin, Hart Research

**DATE:** February 28, 2025

**RE:** Findings from National Survey on Higher Education Reform

---

Our firms conducted a national survey of registered voters to assess voter attitudes regarding higher education. The big picture shows that voters want change in higher education – defined as any formal program beyond high school – saying federal and state governments should evaluate the value of degrees and provide that information to students, and think there should be consequences for schools providing programs that do not offer good value to students.

Key findings from the survey, fielded February 10-13, 2025, with 1,015 respondents, are:

- 1. Voters see a need for major change in higher education.** Overall, 61 percent of voters – including 75 percent of Republicans, 62 percent of independents, and 46 percent of Democrats – say higher education needs major changes or a complete overhaul. Just 10 percent overall say higher education is working well and 25 percent say higher education needs minor changes.
- 2. Strong majorities say student loans, increases in tuition and student fees, and degree programs with few or no job prospects after graduation are significant problems.** Eighty-two percent of voters say “student loans that take years to pay off, or cannot be paid off at all” are a significant problem for students, 77 percent say “increases in tuition and student fees” are a significant problem, and 58 percent say “degree programs that offer few or no job prospects after graduation” are a significant problem. Those three issues outpace “colleges focused on lavish facilities rather than on instruction” (49 percent significant problem), “colleges focusing too much on far-left and ‘woke’ ideologies” (44 percent), and “taking more than four years to graduate, or not graduating at all from a traditional college or university” (30 percent).
- 3. Earnings after graduation and loan debt levels are the most important considerations in assessing a degree program’s value.** Forty-five percent of voters name “how much money graduates earn after graduation” as one of their two most important elements in determining value, while 43 percent name “how much loan debt students have after graduation”, 32 percent name “how many students in that program graduate”, 31 percent name “how much in tuition a student pays,” and 12 percent name “the average grades of the graduates.”

**4. More than three-quarters of voters say federal and state governments should evaluate and disclose the value of college degrees.** Voters say “federal and state governments that provide funding to colleges and universities” should “evaluate the value of the degrees those colleges offer to students, and provide that information to the public” by a 78 to 15 percent margin, including a 76 to 17 percent margin among Democrats, a 74 to 20 percent margin among independents, and an 85 to 10 percent margin among Republicans.

**5. By a nearly two-to-one margin, voters believe there should be consequences if schools are providing degree programs that do not offer good value to graduates.** Voters say there should be “consequences for the university, such as discontinuing or no longer receiving funding for those programs” that “do not offer good value to graduates – like if they require high tuition or loans but do not lead to good jobs” by a 59 to 31 percent margin. Democrats say there should be consequences by a 53 to 33 percent margin, independents say there should be consequences by a 58 to 32 percent margin, and Republicans say there should be consequences by a 68 to 26 percent margin.

For all the discussion about higher education over the last few years, student and parent concerns about value – shared by majorities of voters – have flown somewhat under the radar. Transparency regarding value and consequences for programs that fall short are popular with voters across the political spectrum.

### ***Methodology and Sample***

This national survey of 1,015 registered voters was conducted February 10-13, 2025, using a mixed-mode methodology, with 16 percent of interviews conducted by live callers with a respondent on a landline, 38 percent of interviews conducted by live callers with a respondent on a cellphone, and 46 percent of interviews conducted through text-to-web. Respondents were selected randomly from i360’s national registered voter file, and quotas were set for state, race, gender, age, and education. Completed interviews were minimally weighted by education to reflect 2024 turnout estimates.

The margin of error for the full sample, with respondents splitting 50 percent for one response and 50 percent for another response is plus-or-minus 3.08 percentage points. The margin of error increases for smaller subgroups within the sample. For example, the margin of error is plus-or-minus 4.38 percentage points for subgroups of 500 and 9.80 percentage points for subgroups of 100.