



EDUCATION VALUE

Campaign

**RESEARCH FINDINGS, MESSAGING STRATEGY
AND TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

*A path forward for increasing post high school
enrollment in Indiana*

ADDRESSING THE DECLINE IN POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT

Enrollment in education beyond high school – including two- and four-year degree programs and shorter-term credentials – *declined for the fifth consecutive year in 2019*, marking the largest year-to-year drop to 59%. And that is pre-pandemic, meaning this year’s 2020 numbers are likely to look worse.

As Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers noted in a recent report about the enrollment decline,

“The ongoing attitude that a college degree doesn’t hold value for Hoosiers is a contributing factor that cannot be overlooked.”

To move the needle on postsecondary attainment, we must create attitudinal buy-in for these programs. That requires *fundamentally reshaping beliefs around the declining ROI of post high school education.*

METHODOLOGY

We undertook a multi-stage research process to unearth key insights about the college enrollment decline in Indiana.

Research

Reviewed **24 primary research pieces** on the topic.

Conducted **105 interviews** with audience members and experts on the topic.

Developed insights about relevant behavioral science heuristics.

Analyzed **1.4 million tweets, posts, threads and news articles** about the topic.

Plan

Conducted a TORCH ideation session to develop creative insights based on our knowledge of the audiences.

Presented several creative concepts and tactics to the client team and homed in on the top ideas for testing.

Test

Held focus groups with 40 high school students and **10 in-depth-interviews** with educators.

Fielded a survey reaching **1,254 Indiana residents** to get quantitative insights from our audiences.

Deliver

Developed a plan with key findings, language strategy/message recommendations and communications and tactical ideas for starting a movement to address Indiana's enrollment decline.

WHAT WE HEARD

THE COLLEGE VALUE CONVERSATION IS AT A TIPPING POINT

The tone of discussion around whether college is ‘worth it’ has grown more negative in the last two years.

The volume of these conversations also has grown. There is a heavy focus on costs, value and the perceived decline in the standard of higher education.

Yabaaa Dabaa Doo @FutbolML

College is not worth the money and time. Give some basic education and start working. I don't know why they are so eager to waste 4 precious years of their lives in doing absolutely nothing and just wasting parent's hard earned money.

2:10 PM · Dec 6, 2020 · Eudaimonics · 6 hr. ago · edited 5 hr. ago
Buffalo, NY

If you want to work any office job, you pretty much need a degree.
That being said you can make pretty good money in various office positions even with an English or History degree.
If it's worth the cost is another story altogether. If you go to some expensive private school and have massive debt for an ok paying job, it's probably not worth it.
If you go to a public university, then generally it will be worth it.
If you work in STEM, chances are it's going to be a good investment.
However, there's plenty of trades and other professions where you can make good or decent wages. Anything from mechanics to construction or even government jobs.
Still if you don't know how to market your skills, you might be stuck in lower wage jobs degree or no.

alberta roberta @robdrydyke

i wish I could go back and tell my 17 y.o. self that learning career skills outside of postsecondary school is fun and also a hell of a lot cheaper

3:29 PM · Jul 27, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

... Retweets 4 Quote Tweets 52 Likes

PragerU @prageru

Since 1963, college tuition has increased by 1600%. Student loan debt is over \$1.5 trillion nationwide. Besides medicine, law, and hard sciences, most majors don't guarantee employment after graduation.

So is it worth going to college? WATCH

12:37 PM · Jun 8, 2021

37 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 86 Likes

BUT WE HAVEN'T LOST THE BATTLE YET

A majority of Hoosiers say they feel “favorable” toward college.

What is your opinion of each of the following opportunities after high school?

(Top 2 box favorability: somewhat/very)

| | Total |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Higher education | 82% |
| College | 78% |
| Trade school / vocational program | 78% |
| Certificate / credential program | 69% |

BUT THEY DON'T BELIEVE THAT COLLEGE IS WORTH IT

College is too expensive

"As soon as they can start working and making money, they're going to go that route. Our kids start doing that stuff — and they think they've got the world by the neck. They can start saving money and when they get their driver's license, they can buy a pickup."

Teacher

"Cost is a big concern, and probably rightfully so. I feel the media blows it up too. Teenagers pay attention to the news, and are coming in worried about a lot of things."

Teacher

"College is ridiculously expensive and there aren't enough options. It's a way to keep poor people poor."

Adult Learner

College isn't necessary

"I look at my friend that's mega thousands in debt. She got another degree thinking it would help her in her job, money-wise, and it didn't do anything."

Adult Learner

"You can do a lot of careers and not go to college. Sometimes it's worth it, but for what I want to do, it isn't."

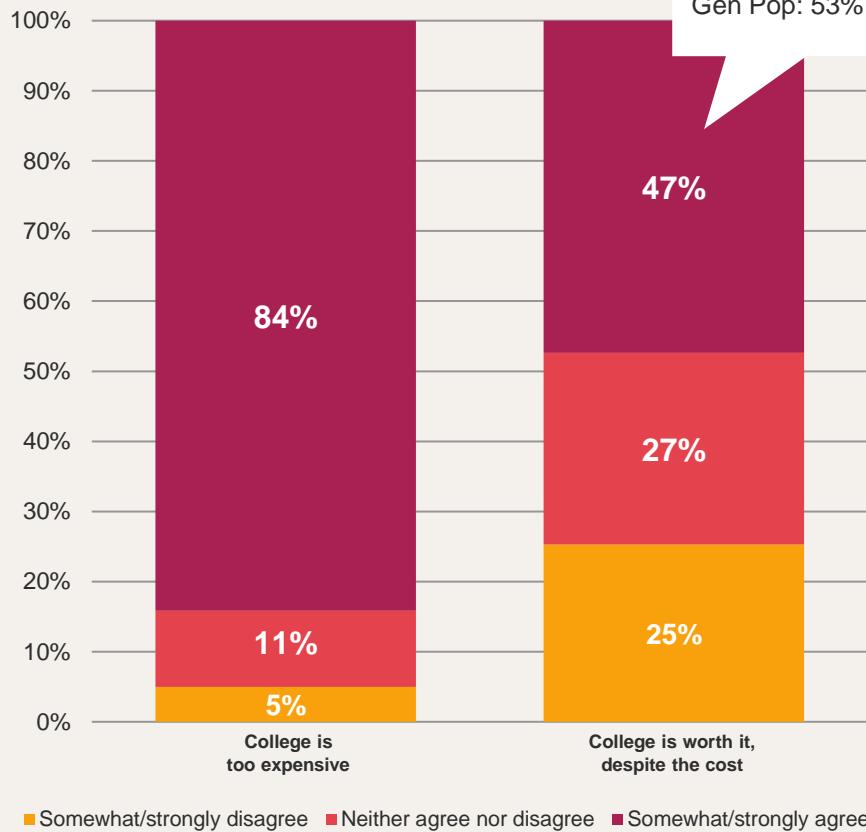
High School Student

"Again, I do not feel that college or universities have an educational curriculum that can benefit me in ways to justify the significant number of years I would then be in debt paying off that education. Simply put, in today's society, there are a multitude of ways to bring in decent income that in no way rely on traditional education."

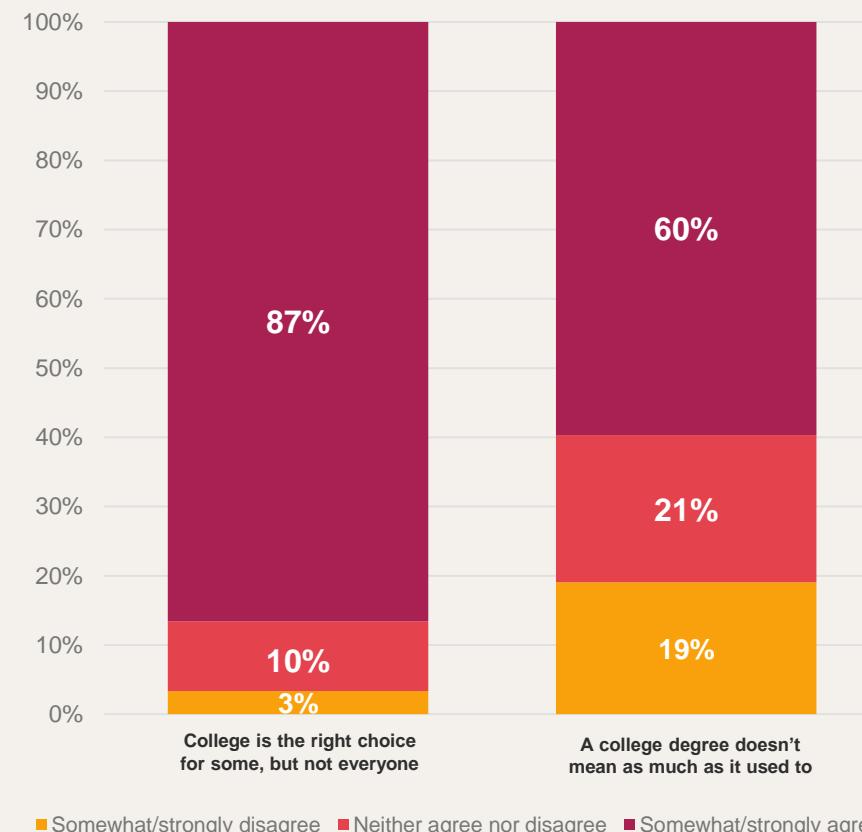
Adult Learner

THE REASONS WHY WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE

College is too expensive



College isn't necessary



COLLEGE IS BECOMING AN 'US VS. THEM' ISSUE

Hoosiers balk at the idea of being told what to do by out of touch elites who don't know them.

They fundamentally distrust the people tasked with delivering the message. That means that activating an army of advocates is critical – particularly parents, who are most trusted, and our strongest pro-college advocates.

"College to me is an elite platform, if you can even get there."

Parent



Please indicate how trustworthy you believe each of the following people/institutions are when it comes to providing guidance, advice, and resources about education beyond high school.

(Top 2 box: trustworthy and extremely trustworthy)

| | |
|--|-----|
| Federal government | 22% |
| The state government | 27% |
| My local government | 27% |
| Representatives from colleges and universities | 44% |
| Community organizations/non-profits | 58% |
| Guidance counselors/teachers | 66% |
| My friends | 70% |
| My family | 77% |

THIS, OF COURSE, TRANSLATES TO LOW CONSIDERATION AMONG TARGET AUDIENCES

EDUCATION

Indiana sees another statewide drop in college enrollment

APRIL 26, 2021

College Enrollment For Hoosier High Schoolers Is Still Going Down. It Will Likely Get Worse

00:00 4:1 ORIGINAL STORY FROM IPBS-RJC

JEANIE LINDSAY [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)

Article origination IPBS-RJC

Fewer high school graduates in Indiana are enrolling in college according to a recent report from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education.

The commission said college-going rates in Indiana are at their lowest point in recent history at just 59 percent – that's a drop of 6 percentage points over the past five years. The report's data comes from 2019, so state and school officials

Indiana Sees Another Statewide Drop in College Enrollment

Credit: WTH

Fall enrollment at Indiana's public colleges has declined again statewide, with only Indiana and Purdue universities' flagship campuses and some Ivy Tech Community College sites reporting gains.

By Associated Press | Nov. 1, 2021, at 3:20 p.m.

Save [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [p](#) ...

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — Fall enrollment at Indiana's public colleges has declined again statewide, with only Indiana and Purdue universities' flagship campuses and some Ivy Tech Community College sites reporting gains.

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education said the overall 2.6% drop in degree-seeking students this fall at public universities brings Indiana's five-year loss to 10.4%, down from 267,598 students in fall 2016 to 239,799 this year, The Journal Gazette reported.

TD Ameritrade Sync all your devices

| | | |
|----------------|-----|---|
| Adult Learners | 27% | Would probably/definitely consider enrolling in a 4-year Bachelor's degree at some point in the future |
| Students | 50% | |
| Parents | 71% | Would probably/definitely consider recommending that their child/someone enroll in a 4-year Bachelor's degree at some point in the future |
| Gen Pop | 73% | |

"I do not feel that colleges or universities have an educational curriculum that can benefit me in ways to justify the significant number of years I would then be in debt paying off that education."

Adult Learner

"I don't want to spend four more years in college just to rack up student debt and be broke by 30."

High School Student

"I'm not interested in a career that involves that type of schooling."

High School Student

"I don't have any career goals that I would want to spend years and my life's savings to go back to school."

Adult Learner

**SO, HOW DO WE MOVE THE
NEEDLE AND INCREASE
POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT?**

WHAT ISN'T WORKING WITH THE CURRENT NARRATIVE

The What

The “what” – the main focus – has been on college – which both causes many to **tune out** and isn’t representative of all the postsecondary education options available to Hoosiers.

“When I think of ‘higher education,’ I automatically think of college.”

High School Student

The Why

The “why” – the benefit – has been **closely linked to college**, but if they don’t buy into the premise, they won’t buy into the benefit.

“Right now, I see people with college degrees in the same position as people without degrees.”

Parent

The How

Cost is the primary barrier, yet **they don’t know “how”** to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. It feels like the onus is on them to find support.

“Having someone to help you and display your options for you would be nice.”

High School Student

AUDIENCES DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE RESOURCES WORK FOR THEM

When it comes to state-supported financial aid programs...

47%

believe "these programs are within reach" for people like me

(37% for adult learners)

31%

believe "these programs are easy to find and apply for"

72%

believe "it's overwhelming trying to sort through all the different options"

78%

believe "more support is needed to help people navigate different options"

THE WAY FORWARD: REDUCE FRICTION AT EVERY STEP

The What & The Why

It's about engaging emotionally, not just rationally.

You can't convince people to agree with you.

You have to show them that they already do.

The How

It's about leaning into the biggest area of friction and showing how it can be reduced.

You can't tell people what they need to do – especially as the government.

You need to show them that it's possible.

HOW THAT COMES TO LIFE IN THE CAMPAIGN

| | We need to make it feel | What it looks like |
|------|---|---|
| What | Relevant You're talking to someone like me. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Focus on “many paths,” not just college.Emphasize individualism and choice.Expand the definition of “college.” |
| Why | Valuable I'll gain something from putting in the work; it's worth it. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Start broad, talking about the benefits of all education opportunities – then talk about college, specifically.Emphasize near-term benefits before long-term ones.Focus on access to opportunity and flexibility. |
| How | Accessible I have the support I need to make my plans a reality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Create a loud, consistent drumbeat around the range of aid/scholarship/grant opportunities.Emphasize mentorship, tools and resources. |

RELEVANT: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.

Support audiences'
fundamental belief in
their own **individualism**.

2.

Make education
relevant by speaking to
a **range of options**.

3.

Dispel the “**four years,**
\$200K” myth.

VALUABLE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.

Focus first on what education **means for today before talking about future benefits.**

2.

What it means for today is not about in-person, classroom experience, but rather about the notion of 'opening doors**' to what's right for you.**

3.

Show the **doors will stay open, providing long-term flexibility.**

ACCESSIBLE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.

Our audiences want to learn how to make education **more affordable.**

2.

Show stories of others like our audiences who have succeeded, but don't gloss over the struggle.

3.

The vast majority of Hoosiers surveyed deem family members as the most trustworthy guides.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: MESSAGE ARCHITECTURE

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| In a line | <p>Option 1: After high school, you decide what comes next – and there are endless paths you can take. But whatever you want to pursue, education can help open doors and expand options, today and tomorrow.</p> <p>Option 2: Wherever you want to go, there's no one way to get there. Education can help open doors, and leave them open, providing you with flexibility and control now and in the future.</p> | | |
| Core language pillars | making it feel relevant | making it feel valuable | making it feel accessible |
| Specific language to use + Key lexicon and language that connects our pillars to what resonates with our target audiences | <p>Education opportunities beyond high school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">When you're exploring what's next, college is just one path among many.There are many paths you can take, depending on what's right for you.You can choose from options like skills certifications, trade school, a 2-year Associate degree, or 4-year Bachelor's degree.Many programs can be completed in as little as 2 to 3 semesters, and are designed so you can balance them part-time or in the evenings along with a job. <p>College</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">While a 4-year, in-person may be right for some, others are looking for something faster and more flexible.Opportunities meet the needs of people at all stages of their lives—including short-term, online, and part-time options.With many programs, you can learn at your own pace, taking as much or as little time as you need – and some are entirely online. | <p>Today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Education should be practical, preparing you for what's next.No matter what you pick, you're becoming a stronger candidate for what's next, helping get your foot in the door to the career – and life – you want.[COLLEGE] Benefits extend beyond the classroom. You can get involved with professional organizations, get access to career centers, and meet new people. <p>Tomorrow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">What you want to do today may not be what you want to do tomorrow.You might want to start a career in a different, growing field, or land a role where you're managing others.Education after high school expands what you're eligible for in the first place.Different from on-the-job training, you learn not just how to do one job – but how to apply a skillset to many jobs.That gives you flexibility to make a change if you want to down the line. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Scholarships, grants, and aid can make the cost of your education in Indiana manageable.But making education a reality also means having the support to get started – and along the way.From finding programs that will help lead to the career you want to connecting you with the right financial assistance opportunities there are mentors, counselors, and people who've been there before, who can help navigate the process and make your goals feel more within reach. |

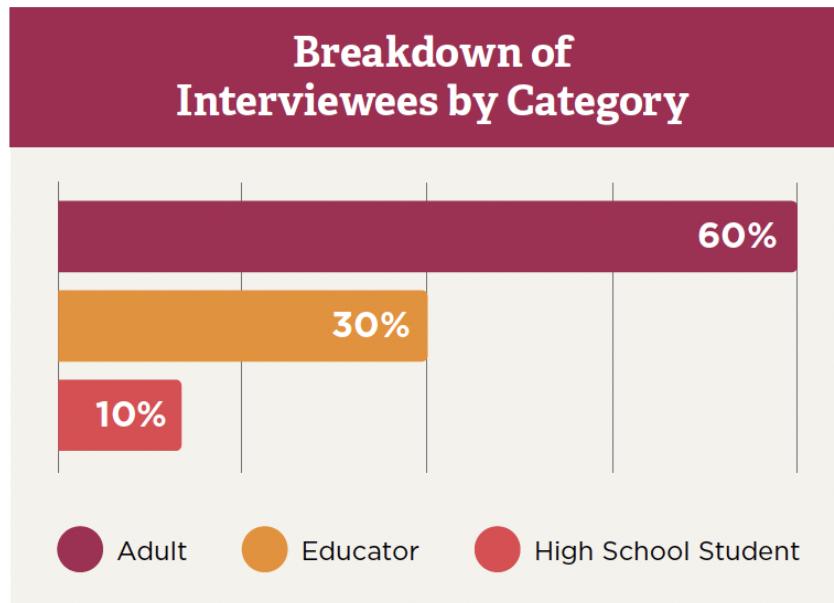
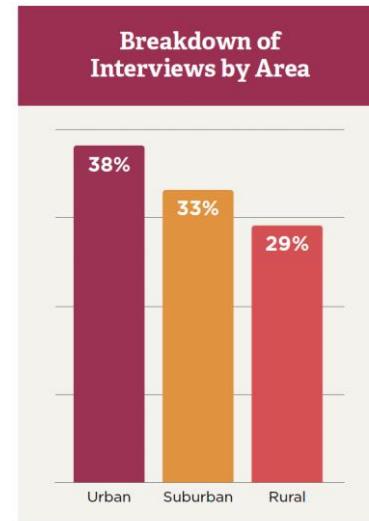
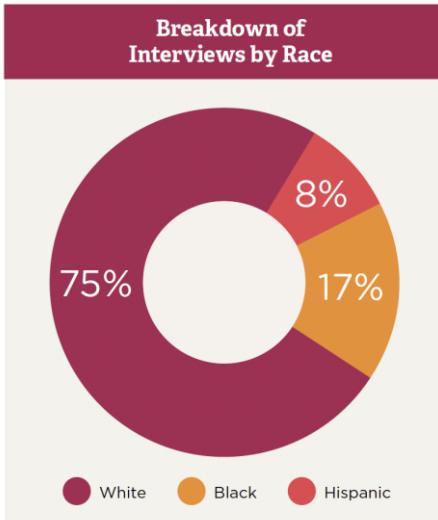
THANK YOU!

APPENDIX

EXPERT IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

| Name | Title | Organization | Location |
|--------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| Tim Nowak | East Indy Achievement Zone Director of Youth Services | John H. Boner Community Center | Central Indiana |
| Sue Ellspermann | President | Ivy Tech | Central Indiana |
| Kate Lee | Executive Director or Education & Workforce | South Bend Regional Chamber | Northwest Indiana |
| Brienne Hooker | Executive Director | Jasper Newton Foundation | Northwest Indiana |
| Emily Werner | Probation Officer | Dubois County Courts | Southwest Indiana |
| Fred Jackson | Outreach Coordinator | Indiana Commission for Higher Education | Northwest Indiana |
| Maggie Stevens | CEO | Foster Success | Central Indiana |
| Karrah Herring | Chief Equity, Inclusion & Opportunity Officer | State of Indiana | Central Indiana |
| Lauro Zuniga | Padre Estrella | Indiana Commission for Higher Education | Northeast Indiana |
| Kathy Huffman | Director of the Eco Network | Community Education Coalition | Southeast Indiana |
| Wendy Dant Chesser | President and CEO | One Southern Indiana | Southeast Indiana |
| Andy Terrell | One Stop Coordinator | WorkOne Southern Indiana | Southeast Indiana |
| Dennis Bland | President | Center for Leadership Development | Central Indiana |
| Seana Murphy | Consultant | CICF/The Learning Tree | Multiple Service Areas |
| De'Amon Harges | Founder | The Learning Tree | Multiple Service Areas |

INTERCEPT INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS



SURVEY AUDIENCE CRITERIA

We allowed natural fall out of demographics like age, ethnicity, and political affiliation to accurately reflect Indiana's population.

| GEN POP | ADULT LEARNERS | PARENTS | STUDENTS |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indiana resident• Between 18-65 years old | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indiana resident• Between 18-65 years old• Completed high school but no further education | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indiana resident• Between 18-65 years old• Has a child / children between the ages of 16-18 living at home | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indiana resident• Between 16-18 years old• Currently in high school |

DESPITE ALL THE STATE IS DOING, AWARENESS IS LOW

While most know about college need-based aid and scholarship programs, awareness of many other things the state offers trends lower

| | | % who are aware | | | |
|----------|---|-----------------|----------|---------|---------|
| | | Adult Learners | Students | Parents | Gen Pop |
| General | Need-based financial awards | 50% | 55% | 73% | 72% |
| | Non-need based financial awards | 31% | 33% | 42% | 48% |
| | Academic achievement based financial awards | 54% | 58% | 78% | 71% |
| | Non-academic achievement based financial awards | 38% | 43% | 54% | 52% |
| | Grants for certificate programs / trade school | 63% | 55% | 72% | 71% |
| Specific | 21 st Century Scholars | 59% | 60% | 72% | 63% |
| | EARN Indiana | 26% | 23% | 38% | 39% |
| | Next Level Jobs | 31% | 25% | 41% | 42% |
| | Frank O'Bannon Grant | 25% | 15% | 43% | 44% |

THIS ALL, OF COURSE, TRANSLATES TO LOW ENROLLMENT

The collage includes:

- Top Left:** A screenshot of a news article from WTHR-TV titled "Indiana sees another statewide drop in college enrollment". It features a photo of a large, historic university building with a clock tower.
- Top Right:** A screenshot of a video from PBS-RJC titled "College Enrollment For Hoosier High Schoolers Is Still Going Down. It Will Likely Get Worse". It shows a video player interface with a play button and a thumbnail image of a university building.
- Bottom:** A screenshot of a news article from The Journal Gazette titled "Indiana Sees Another Statewide Drop in College Enrollment". It includes a photo of a university building and a quote from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education.

| | Probably consider | Definitely consider |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Adult Learners | 16% | 11% |
| Students | 25% | 25% |
| Parents | 25% | 46% |
| Gen Pop | 30% | 44% |

Would probably/definitely consider recommending that their children/someone / enrolling in a 4-year Bachelor's degree at some point in the future

"I do not feel that college or universities have an educational curriculum that can benefit me in ways to justify the significant number of years I would then be in debt paying off that education."

Adult Learner, Test Phase

"I don't want to spend 4 more years in college just to rack up student debt and be broke by 30."

Student, Test Phase

"I'm not interested in a career that involves that type of schooling."

Student, Test Phase

"I don't have any career goals that I would want to spend years and my life's savings to go back to school."

Adult Learner, Test Phase