

EDUCATION VALUE *Campaign*

COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH SUMMARY

A compilation of key takeaways from phase one research on postsecondary enrollment in Indiana.

METHODOLOGY

We are undertaking a multi-stage research process to unearth key insights about the college enrollment decline in Indiana, including:

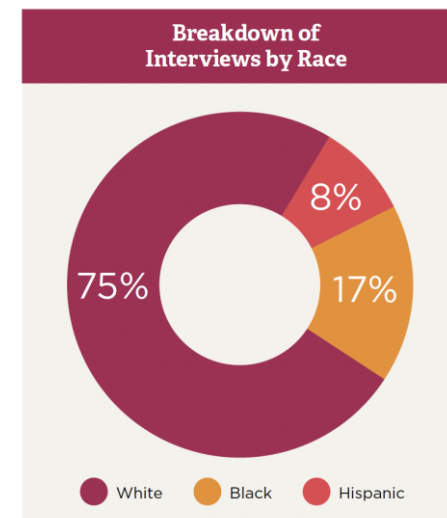
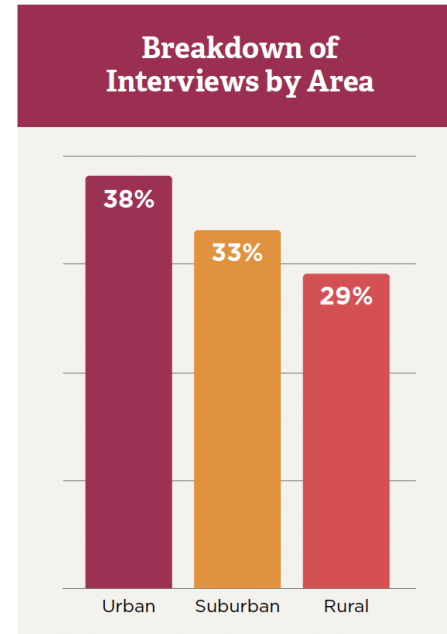
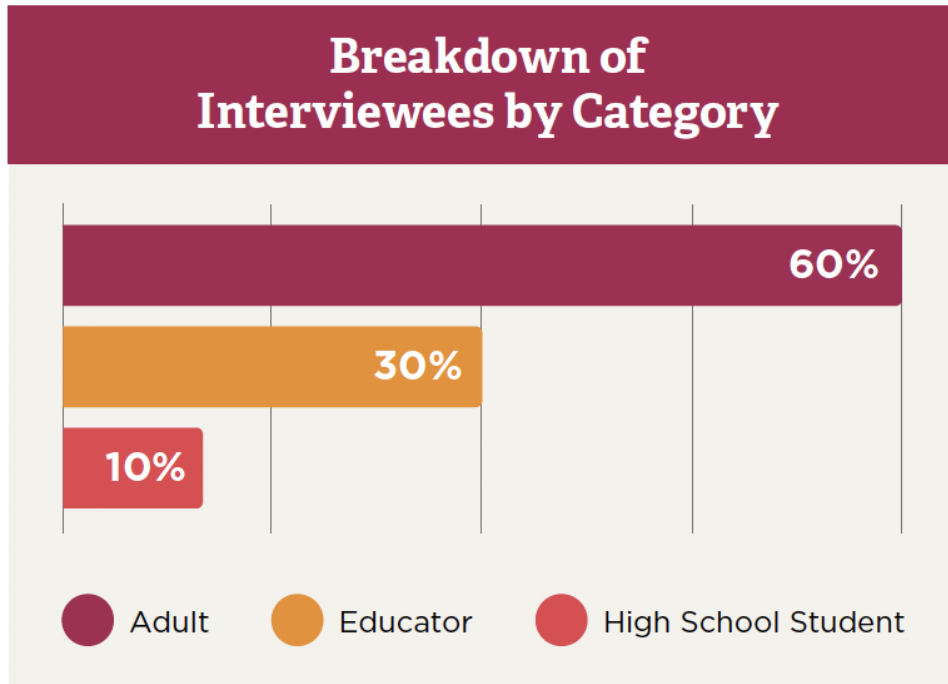
- We reviewed **24 primary research** pieces on the topic;
- Conducted **105 interviews** with audience members and experts on the topic;
- Developed insights about relevant **behavioral science** heuristics;
- Analyzed **online conversations** about relevant topics as well as online information about **key audiences**;
- **Held focus groups** with nine high school students, 13 parents and 16 adult learners; and 10 **in-depth-interviews** with educators.
- To come: Field a **survey** reaching 1,500 Indiana residents.



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 of 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
Karra 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



OBJECTIVES



Understand the Decline

What are the barriers to postsecondary enrollment and why is it declining?



Get Inside Our Audiences' Hearts & Minds

Understand them so we can more effectively message and deliver a creative insight.



Identify Potential Solutions

Recommend approaches to messaging and message delivery that can be applied in our plan.

From Honda Civic to Luxury Yacht

Due to its cost, college is out of reach and perceived as a luxury good that only the wealthy can afford. The cost issue is in part reality, and in part perception. And while people are aware that scholarships exist, navigating them is a huge challenge.



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 📌

“I got so caught up in taking care of my son, I never had the chance to go back. Either I (take) away from providing for my son to go to school, or I work hard to provide the best life I can.”

Miranda Luna, Potential Adult Learner, Evansville

‘I Need Cash Now’

Because of financial pressures, there's a lure to skip the two-to four-year journey and go straight into the workforce. The labor shortage is exacerbating this trend.



alberta roberta
@robdyrdyke

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

“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.”

Travis Schroering, Educator, Jasper

Entering the Unknown

People can't see what is on the other side of a college degree. Will it lead to more prosperity, or debt and a retail job? Narratives around student debt, and conversations that costs are rising as outcomes fall, fuel these worries. People also react negatively when we state directly that college degrees lead to better-paying jobs.

Posted by u/apell_ri 1 year ago

How important is college in the pursuit of a decent paying career?



Eloisa Ortiz
@Eloisa68NIOU1

Replying to @EricG1247

I have a 2 year accounting degree that worth as much as toilet paper in this economy. I still work a min wage job at 40. No one wants to pay employees anything it's all about making money for the company the owners and the share holders. No one cares about the ppl that do the work

"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."

LeeAnn Anderson, Potential Adult Learner, Muncie

Rugged Individualism

People believe education is 'a choice that's up to me, and I'm not going to let out of touch elites tell me I am wrong for not pursuing it.' They are especially averse to being told what to do when the government acts as a messenger, and they balk at comparisons to 'role models' whose lives are different than their own.

"I don't think anything should be pushed upon someone. Now, informing is one thing, but forcing it upon somebody I don't think should be."

Shannon "Boo" Brown, Potential Adult Learner, Brookville

INSIGHTS *Understanding the Decline & Our Audiences*

College is King

Efforts to inform people about non-degree pathways are increasing enrollment in those programs, but the dominant perception of what 'college' means still centers around two- and four-year degrees.

Posted by u/Realistic-Tower-6959 4 months ago

Is college important as I think it is?



ManE @MannyE16 · Dec 3, 2018

Replying to @IHanMN

Agreed! Need to change perception that only path is college-bound. Elementary-high schools plastered with college pennants etc deepens the achievement gap.

Us vs. Them

Those without degrees often feel like the messengers for pro-college campaigns are out-of-touch elites who know little about their lives. Therefore, messages about the value and importance of college can come across as paternalistic and preachy.



Special "Spooky" Ed
@Sober_Ed

Replying to @KelliAn53385790

Exactly why I am not going to college. Its not worth wasting money on a education based on politics.

I would rather just stick to becoming a pilot with flight school.

RECOMMENDATIONS *Identifying Potential Solutions/Messaging Ideas*

Reframe College as One of Many Options

“College” is narrowly defined – and likely to elicit a visceral negative response. A consistent refrain was that “college is not right for everyone.” As such, people reject narratives that suggest it’s superior to other options. Across audiences, the idea that “college is one path among many” and “no one’s journey is the same” resonates.

“You don’t need a college degree to get a good job. I know someone who didn’t go to college making the same as someone who did.”

Parent

Talk about What Education Means for Today

Focusing on long-term benefits of an education (be it financial returns or more stability) feels too far in the future to be relevant – particularly for high school students. For an audience that feels like many opportunities are closed off to them, the idea of education “opening doors” or helping them “get their foot in the door” is immensely resonant.

“The more you learn, you get your foot in the door. You keep building and it’s going to give you more opportunities.”

Adult Learner

RECOMMENDATIONS *Identifying Potential Solutions/Messaging Ideas*

Acknowledge Skepticism and Costs

For both high school students and adult learners, relatable language like “if you aren’t sure education after high school is right for you, you’re not alone” and “rightfully so, it can sound like an expensive choice” keeps them listening. It acknowledges their experiences and gives us an opportunity to carefully address the potentially triggering issue of costs. To do so, we must expand their definition of post-high school learning beyond college, which they equate with “expensive”. We must also show how we can help simplify the financial assistance process.

“When you say ‘it’s going to be hard’ – I believe you.
It makes it relatable.”

Adult Learner

“When I hear student loans, it triggers me.”

Adult Learner

Focus on Key Supports

Many brought up tedious application processes, confusion over what scholarships they’re eligible for (and shared narrow views on the types of scholarships available: “only for high achievers and those who really need it”), and difficulty filling out the FAFSA. They also agree there’s a general lack of support in navigating these matters. All are enthusiastic about the idea of more support, both financial AND from mentors and counselors who can help them figure out how to get it in the first place.

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

Student

RECOMMENDATIONS *Identifying Potential Solutions/Messaging Ideas*

Tell Authentic Stories

Across the board, Hoosiers don't appreciate the suggestions that just because others have found success through education means they should be able to also. It contradicts the idea that they are unique individual, each with different circumstances. However, we know from behavioral science that presenting people stories of people 'like them' succeeding tends to be effective. To that end, we recommend ensuring the stories we tell are authentic, gritty and demonstrative of *struggle* that people face in obtaining postsecondary education – not glossy depictions of perfect endings.

"I hate when they say, 'Other people did it so you can too!' You don't know what I've been through. You don't know my struggles."

Adult Learner

Set a Positive Tone

Messages that painted a picture of a world that is "complicated" and "filled with events beyond our control" (pandemic, factories closing, etc.) or ones where employers are "demanding" educational upgrades were met with mixed responses. While some appreciated the frank, direct assessment of their lives, others felt the language to be too "harsh."

"It annoyed me that it talked about COVID. Everything that mentions it is like tearing the Band-Aid back off."

High School Student

WHAT COMES NEXT



TORCH Ideation

Develop a big idea/ theme on which to anchor the campaign and from which to build the messages. (e.g., adult mentoring network, classroom-to-workplace library, eliminate jargon)



Survey Instrument

We'll test these messages and baseline sentiment around postsecondary enrollment through a quantitative instrument/ survey. (e.g., testing current views on college, cost, messages)



Build the Messages & Plan

Using all of these insights, we'll develop final messages and a comprehensive plan for reaching our audiences. (e.g., communications plan/ tactics, message architecture and guidebook)

THANK YOU!