

# 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

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**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

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**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.

37 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets



**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

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

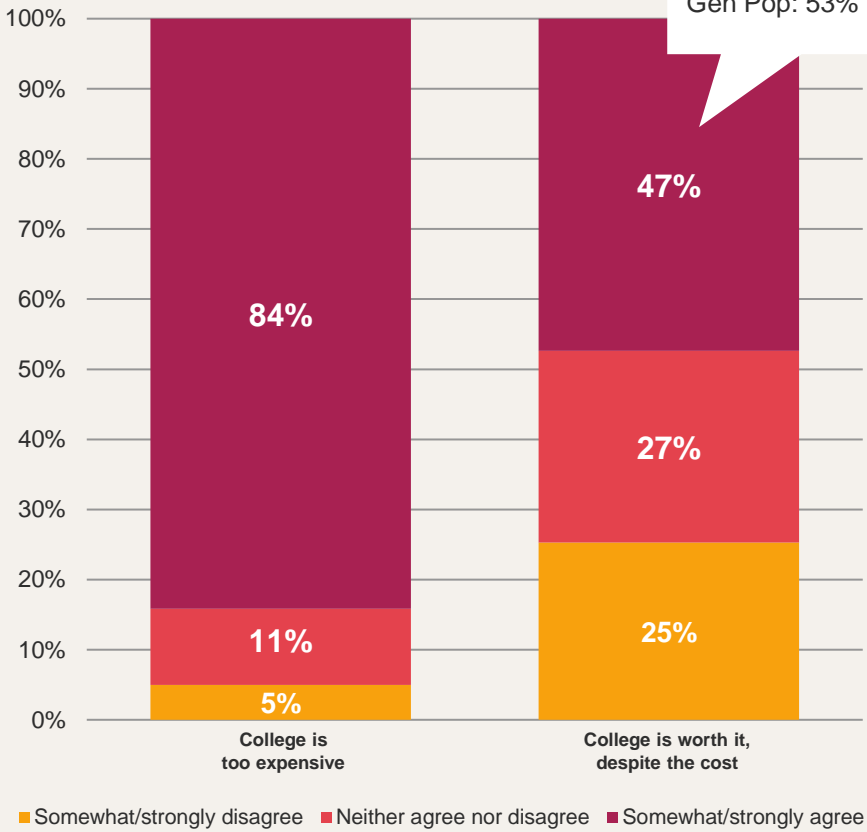
*"Again, I do not feel that college or universities have an educational curriculum that can benefit me in ways to justify the significant number of years *I would then be in debt paying off that education*. Simply put, in today's society, there are a multitude of ways to bring in decent income that in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

Adult Learner

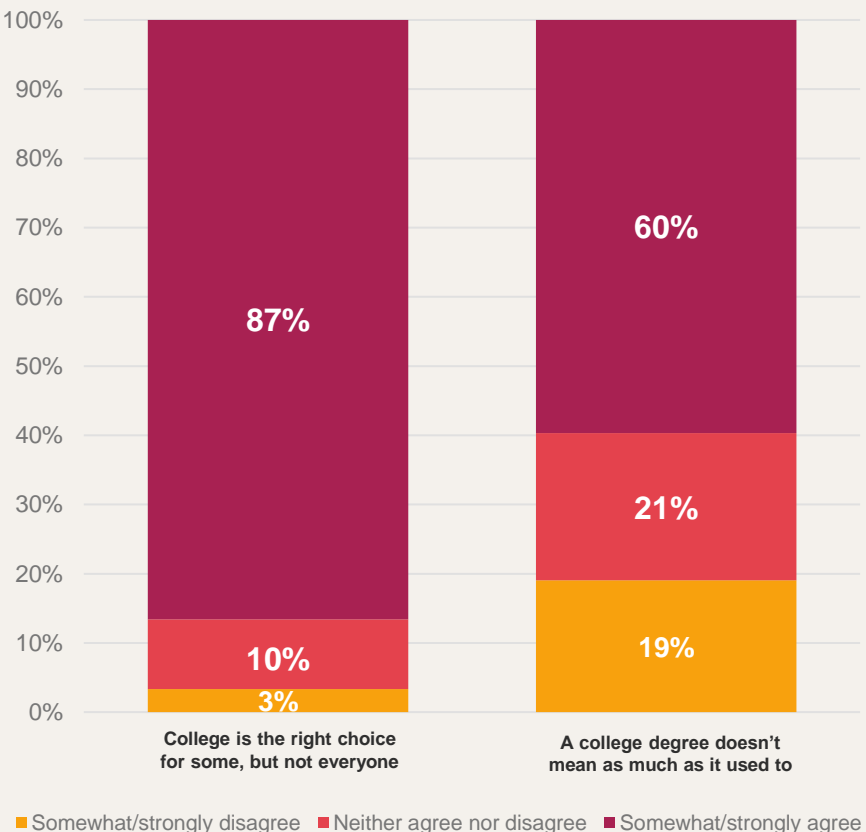
# THE REASONS WHY WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE

## College is too expensive

Top 2 box agreement:  
Parents: 60%  
Adult Learners: 46%  
Students: 43%  
Gen Pop: 53%



## 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

Four-year institutions saw a 1.3% drop while two-year schools saw a 7.1% decline.



**Indiana Sees Another Statewide Drop in College Enrollment**

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.

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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.

APRIL 24, 2021


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

Article origination IPBS-RJC

JEANIE LINDSAY

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 say the outlook is bleak.



Indiana University Bloomington is one of several schools that saw a decrease in enrollment among freshmen according to the Commission's 2021 College Readiness Report. Indiana University News

no, and low-income high schoolers, said disproportionate factors contribute to students' interest in college.

workforce ready culture," she said.

initial economic demands to

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

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**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

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

# RELEVANT: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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**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

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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 the 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

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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><b>Option 1:</b> 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><b>Option 2:</b> 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 <b>relevant</b>	making it feel <b>valuable</b>	making it feel <b>accessible</b>
Specific language to use  +  Key lexicon and language that connects our pillars to what resonates with our target audiences	<p><b>Education opportunities beyond high school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When you're exploring what's next, college is just one path among many.</li><li>• There are many paths you can take, depending on what's right for you.</li><li>• You can choose from options like skills certifications, trade school, a 2-year Associate degree, or 4-year Bachelor's degree.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>	<p><b>Today</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education should be practical, preparing you for what's next.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• [COLLEGE] Benefits extend beyond the classroom. You can get involved with professional organizations, get access to career centers, and meet new people.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scholarships, grants, and aid can make the cost of your education in Indiana manageable.</li><li>• But making education a reality also means having the support to get started – and along the way.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>
	<p><b>College</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• While a 4-year, in-person may be right for some, others are looking for something faster and more flexible.</li><li>• Opportunities meet the needs of people at all stages of their lives—including short-term, online, and part-time options.</li><li>• 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.</li></ul>	<p><b>Tomorrow</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What you want to do today may not be what you want to do tomorrow.</li><li>• You might want to start a career in a different, growing field, or land a role where you're managing others.</li><li>• Education after high school expands what you're eligible for in the first place.</li><li>• Different from on-the-job training, you learn not just how to do one job – but how to apply a skillset to many jobs.</li><li>• That gives you flexibility to make a change if you want to down the line.</li></ul>	

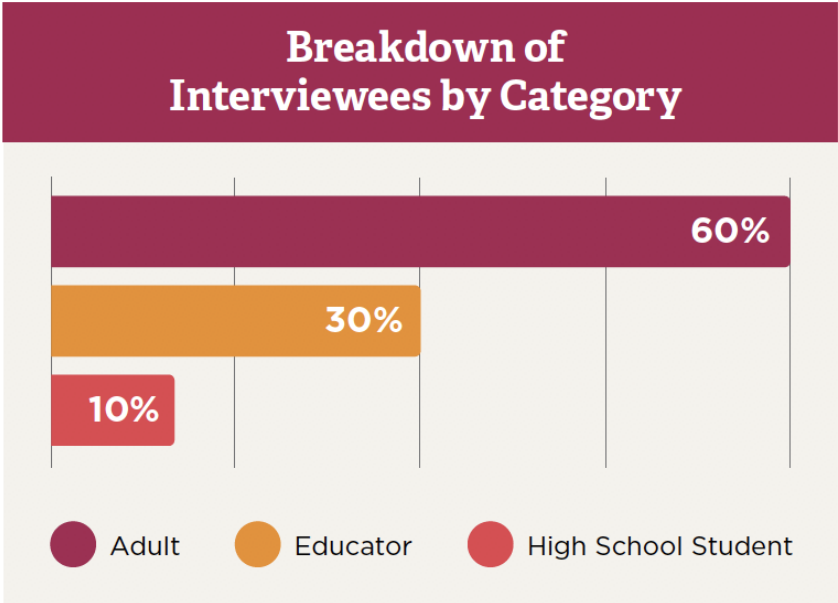
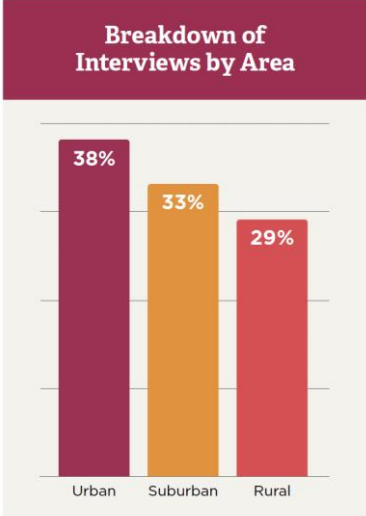
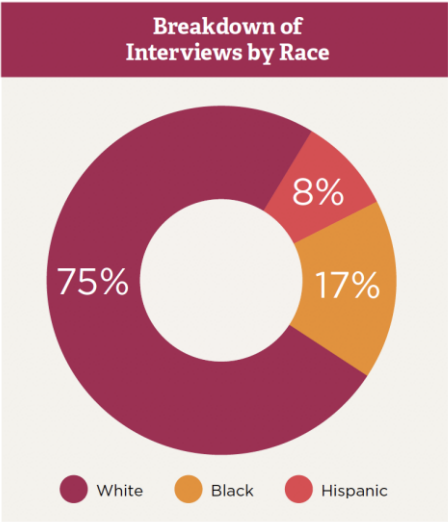
**THANK YOU!**

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



# 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
<b>General</b>	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%
<b>Specific</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> 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

EDUCATION

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Credit: WTHR

APRIL 26, 2021


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JEANIE LINDSAY

Article origination IPBS-RJC

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	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."*

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