Is College Worth It?

*Presentation to Council of Graduate Schools*

*December 8, 2011*
Methodology

- Based on findings from two Pew Research Center surveys conducted in the spring of 2011:

  - **General public (GP) survey** based on telephone interviews conducted with a nationally representative sample of 2,142 adults

  - **College presidents survey** based on a web survey conducted with 1,055 college and university presidents, designed by the Pew Research Center in association with the Chronicle of Higher Education
Is College a Good Value?

% who rate the job the higher education system is doing in providing value for the money spent by students and their families as "Excellent/Good" vs. "Only fair/Poor"

- General public:
  - Excellent/Good: 40
  - Only fair/Poor: 56

- College presidents:
  - Excellent/Good: 76
  - Only fair/Poor: 24

"Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.
Has College Been a Good Investment for You?

% of graduates who say it has been a good investment

- Postgraduate degree: 93%
- 4-year college degree: 82%
- 2-year college degree: 72%
How Useful Was College in Preparing You for a Job or a Career?

% of graduates who say it was very useful

- Postgraduate degree: 57%
- 4-year college degree: 54%
- 2-year college degree: 54%
How Useful Was College in Helping You Grow and Mature as a Person?

% of graduates who say it was very useful

- Postgraduate degree: 74%
- 4-year college degree: 65%
- 2-year college degree: 57%
How Useful Was College in Increasing Your Knowledge and Helping You to Grow Intellectually?

% of graduates who say it was very useful

- Postgraduate degree: 76%
- 4-year college degree: 73%
- 2-year college degree: 61%
Is College Affordable for Most People Today?

% who agree

General public: 22
College presidents: 42
Who Should Pay for College?

% saying the largest share of students’ college expenses should be paid by...

- **General public**
  - Students/their families: 48%
  - State government: 12%
  - Federal government: 18%
  - Private donations: 5%
  - Some combination (vol): 13%

- **College presidents**
  - Students/their families: 63%
  - State government: 22%
  - Federal government: 10%
  - Private donations: 2%
  - Some combination (vol): 2%

“Don’t know/Refused” or “No answer” responses not shown.
Satisfaction with Education

% very satisfied with education

- Postgraduate degree: 90
- 4-year college degree: 72
- 2-year college degree: 43
- Vocational school/some college: 41
- High school graduate or less: 38
Satisfaction with Personal Financial Situation

% very satisfied with personal financial situation

- Postgraduate degree: 40%
- 4-year college degree: 33%
- 2-year college degree: 22%
- Vocational school/some college: 22%
- High school graduate or less: 26%
Satisfaction with Family Life

% very satisfied with family life

- Postgraduate degree: 74%
- 4-year college degree: 81%
- 2-year college degree: 66%
- Vocational school/some college: 70%
- High school graduate or less: 70%

Pew Research Center
Are You Better off than Your Parents?

% saying much better

- Postgraduate degree: 40%
- 4-year college degree: 33%
- 2-year college degree: 36%
- Vocational school/some college: 32%
- High school graduate or less: 36%
Will Your Children Be Better off than You?

% saying much better

- Postgraduate degree: 17
- 4-year college degree: 18
- 2-year college degree: 17
- Vocational school/some college: 25
- High school graduate or less: 33
The Correlation Between Education and Social Class

% saying they belong in the upper or upper-middle class

- Postgraduate degree: 41%
- 4-year college degree: 28%
- 2-year college degree: 17%
- Vocational school/some college: 15%
- High school graduate or less: 12%
Main Purpose of College?

% saying...

To help an individual grow personally and intellectually  
To teach specific skills and knowledge that can be used in the workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To help an individual grow personally and intellectually</th>
<th>To teach specific skills and knowledge that can be used in the workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year college degree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year college degree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational school/some college</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or less</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PewResearchCenter
College Presidents: Is the Higher-Education System in the U.S. Going in the Right or Wrong Direction?

% of college presidents saying...

- **All**
  - Wrong direction: 38%
  - Right direction: 60%

- **4-year research universities**
  - Wrong direction: 36%
  - Right direction: 62%

- **Public universities**
  - Wrong direction: 31%
  - Right direction: 67%

- **Private universities**
  - Wrong direction: 45%
  - Right direction: 54%
Presidents from the Least Selective Four-Year Colleges Are More Pessimistic

% saying the higher-education system is going in the…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selective Level</th>
<th>Wrong direction</th>
<th>Right direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Least selective</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately selective</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most selective</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Few Presidents Say U.S. Higher-Education System Is World’s Best

How does the quality of the higher education system in the U.S. rate in the world?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Today</th>
<th>In 10 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of the best</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>

“No answer” responses not shown.
Just One-in-Five College Presidents Say College Students Are Getting More for Their Money Now than a Decade Ago

Compared with 10 years ago, % saying the value students get for the money they spend on a college education today is...

- Greater than 10 years ago: 22%
- About the same as 10 years ago: 44%
- Less than 10 years ago: 34%

"No answer" responses not shown.
Most College Presidents Say College Students Are Studying Less Now than Ten Years Ago

Compared with college students 10 years ago, % saying the amount of studying college students do these days is…

- More than college students 10 years ago: 7%
- About the same as college students 10 years ago: 40%
- Less than college students 10 years ago: 52%

“No answer” responses not shown.
Overall, Do You Think the Faculty at Your Institution Grade the (Undergraduate) Students...?

% saying…

Too leniently  About right  Too stringently

All

Public universities

Private universities

“No answer” responses not shown.
Presidents Are Split on the Role of a College Education

% saying the most important role that colleges play in the lives of their students is to...

- Provide knowledge and training for working world
- Promote intellectual and personal growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Four-year private college</th>
<th>Four-year public college</th>
<th>Two-year college</th>
<th>For-profit college</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
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<td>50</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*No answer* responses not shown.
How Should the Public Assess Colleges’ Quality? Accreditation and Graduation Rates Are Best, Presidents Say

Which of these would you say is the most effective indicator for the public to use in assessing the overall quality of a college?

- Accreditation: 25%
- Graduation rates: 22%
- National assessment tests or student-engagement surveys: 9%

Note: 35% of respondents said no factor was “very effective” or didn’t answer.
The Most Important Roles Colleges and Universities Play in Society More Broadly

% of presidents who responded “very important” that colleges and universities do each of the following:

- Preparing students to be productive members of workforce: 74%
- Preparing young people to be responsible citizens: 73%
- Ensuring that all qualified students have equal access to college: 72%
- Conducting research to help solve national problems: 54%
- Contributing to economic development of region/locality: 52%
- Providing continuing education to adults of all ages: 37%
- Providing cultural events/enrichment to community: 17%

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Limited Support for Faculty Tenure among College Presidents

If given the choice, which of the following would you prefer make up most of the faculty at your institution?

- Full-time, tenured: 24%
- Long-term or annual contracts: 69%
Leaders of Private Four-year Institutions Are Less Supportive of Tenure than Their Public Peers

If given the choice, which of the following would you prefer make up most of the faculty at your institution?

- Full-time, tenured
- Full-time, long-term contracts

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Full-time, tenured</th>
<th>Full-time, long-term contracts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-year private</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year public</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presidents Who Had Previously Served in Faculty Positions Are More Likely than Leaders Who Had Not to Say They Preferred a Mostly Tenured Professoriate on Their Campuses

% saying they prefer full-time, tenured professors

- Had previously served in faculty position
- Had not previously served in faculty position

Four-year public college:
- 52% had previously served in faculty position
- 37% had not previously served in faculty position

Four-year private college:
- 35% had previously served in faculty position
- 20% had not previously served in faculty position
Just Your Best Guess, 10 Years from Now, During the Typical Semester, What Percentage of Your (Undergraduate) Students Will Be Taking at Least One Course Online?

% saying...

- Less than 25%: 18
- 25-50%: 31
- 51-75%: 27
- More than 75%: 23