

Because you have to get to the finish line before crossing it, we negate; resolved: In the United States, students should be guaranteed two years of free tuition to a community or technical college.

Contention One: Overloading the System

Sub-point A: The Workforce

If students do graduate with a degree, too many workers in the labor market poses a problem. As **Malcolm Harris, editor of *The New Inquiry***, describes, the empiric increase in productivity due to human capital accumulation has not been mirrored by an increase in wages for those workers, as earnings have barely increased since 1979. Competition for the same set of jobs depresses wages, and now the cost to be a productive worker falls on the student while the employers profit.

The point of educational attainment is bettering the economic outlook at the end of the tunnel. If those prospects don't change with a degree, then time and resources are spent without benefit.

Sub-point B: The Schools

For the most part, however, students don't get degrees, which is as big a problem as access. Unfortunately, these institutions have limited resources, which degrade the quality of education.

Jeffrey Selingo in his book *College (Un)bound* details that while community colleges educate the most students, they do with a third of the resources that a public four-year college would have.

Granting free tuition overwhelms already-burdened community colleges in four ways.

First, **Judith Scott-Clayton of Columbia University explains** that offering free tuition would only displace the tuition revenues that colleges would have otherwise received from the students. The implication is that colleges don't have more resources at their disposal.

Second, **Salingo continues** that students today are more likely to reverse transfer from a four-year institution to a two-year institution than the other way around, with financial considerations a certainty. Making the cost to attend community college even cheaper exacerbates that desire.

Third, **Nikki McArthur of Yale University adds** that free tuition in Germany created a system where college was a placeholder for those that were unsure of their future. Without a cost to enroll, classrooms were filled with uninterested students.

Fourth, **Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa write in their book *Academically Adrift*** that the 'college for all' mindset has made high school counselors reluctant to discourage anyone from attending college, even though it clearly is not for everyone. Consequently, students are underprepared and misinformed about the future.

The impact of overcrowding is three-fold.

First, **Scott Shackford of the Reason Foundation highlights** that funding colleges to cover student tuition gives these schools a perverse incentive to ensure that as many students are enrolled as possible, which entails inflating grades. This, however, delegitimizes and devalues the degree at the end.

Second, **David Shipley of Bloomberg Magazine compounds** that what students need isn't decreasing costs but rather schedule flexibility and guidance. When resources get strained, the opposite happens. Instead of providing for what students need, students have less individualized attention.

Third, **Susan Svrluga from the Washington Post impacts** that four-year institutions depend on large first- and second-year classes for revenue that keeps costs down. With students going to community colleges, there are adverse affects for four-year colleges. Problematically, **Selingo again notes** that colleges face two unpalatable choices when funds dry up: cut costs and thus programs or raise prices.

Contention Two: Passing the Buck

Providing free tuition inherently requires a massive increase in government funding. However, this also entails a cut in spending elsewhere for two reasons.

First, it's necessary to understand that budgets are not infinite; rather, they are closer to zero-sum. With a scarcity of resources, of educational improvements are the objective, then the best option should be the only one pursued.

Second, **David Tandberg of Pennsylvania State University finds** that higher education spending empirically trades off with public assistance, transportation, and K-12 spending. This is not only because state budgets must be balanced but also because elected officials perceive higher education to be a worthwhile investment in prosperous times.

Problematically, however, slashing K-12 budgets is not the solution. If students can't be college-ready, there isn't a point to attending in the first place.

Additionally, **Michael Leachman from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities underscores** that cuts to K-12 spending hamper the ability for reform and undermine future international competitiveness for the United States.