

Holding Higher Education Accountable for Quality and Value



Colleges have minimal incentive to ensure their students are getting an education that will lead to higher wages, better jobs, and better quality of life. As a result, today many college students graduate with significant debt, degrees with no value, and find they are eligible only for low-paying jobs, while many colleges charge more every year as they know that taxpayer dollars will make up the difference.

By holding all colleges accountable for delivering a quality education that results in prospects for good jobs, Congress and the Administration can help empower American families to thrive.

Solutions to Support Accountability

All colleges — from elite nonprofit schools to fully online programs — should be held to the same rigorous standards for delivering for their students:

- **Build on the SAVE for Students Act introduced by Sens. Cornyn (R-TX) and Cassidy (R-LA).**
 - › By creating clear bottom lines for college programs, the Administration can work with Congress to hold institutions responsible for charging too much and delivering too little.
- **Incentivize quality.**
 - › The Administration can work with Congress to create new systems of [tiered incentives and consequences](#) for institutions based on the return on investment (ROI) they deliver for students and taxpayers.
- **Link credentials to outcomes.**
 - › The Administration can make sure all workforce credential programs are of high quality by working with Congress to require strong employment and wage outcomes to receive public funding.

Earning a college degree remains the surest path to financial security and economic advancement.

A community college graduate earns an average of [\\$400,000 more over a lifetime](#) than a high school graduate, while the typical bachelor's degree holder earns \$1 million more.

Outcomes vary widely. Some credentials aren't even worth the paper they are printed on. Hundreds of thousands of students enroll in programs whose [typical graduate earns less than a high school graduate](#); others leave college with unaffordable levels of debt. These graduates would have been better off if they had never attended at all.

Those who graduate from the lowest-performing 10% of graduate programs typically earn a full \$50,000 less than graduates from the highest-performing 10% of programs, yet the federal government funds them both equally.

[Arnold Ventures](#) is a philanthropy that supports research to understand the root causes of America's most persistent and pressing problems, as well as evidence-based solutions to address them. By focusing on systemic change, AV is working to improve the lives of American families, strengthen their communities, and promote their economic opportunity. Since Laura and John Arnold launched their foundation in 2008, the philanthropy has expanded, and Arnold Ventures' focus areas include education, criminal justice, health, infrastructure, and public finance, advocating for bipartisan policy reforms that will lead to lasting, scalable change. The Arnolds became signatories of the Giving Pledge in 2010.