



A College Education Provides a Lifetime of Value

The Value of Higher Education: Why Business Officers Should Be Telling This Story

The way business officers communicate the value of higher education is more critical now than ever before. The media landscape has changed, policymakers are scrutinizing the higher education sector, and public pushback continues—on rising college costs, student debt loads, and workforce challenges, to name a few.

While anecdotes about huge sums of student debt or unemployed graduates often make headlines, they don't reflect the reality for most. In fact, recent college graduates with student loans owed about \$30,000 on average at graduation, according to the Institute for College Access and Success, and statistics from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce show that workers with bachelor's degrees earn an average of \$1 million more over their lifetimes than high school graduates.

College graduates are also much more likely to be employed than high school graduates; recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that even for students who graduated into the Great Recession, their college degrees helped them to fare better in the economy than those with no higher education.

College-going benefits society as well, College Board research shows. College graduates are more likely to vote in elections and give back to their communities. They are also more likely to lead healthy lifestyles—exercising more, smoking less—and enjoy longer life spans, on average, than their counterparts who earned only a high school diploma.

Beyond statistics, there are countless stories about the tremendous difference colleges and universities make in the lives of students, and their vast and unique contributions to the communities they call home. These stories are powerful and inspiring anecdotes that also deserve to be shared.

To help business officers communicate these important messages, NACUBO has launched the *Value of Higher Education Initiative*, which aims to counter the negative discourse surrounding the value of higher education, promote its myriad benefits, and shape public opinion toward a more positive perception of higher education's contribution.

In your messaging, we urge you to communicate the value your institution provides to its graduates and its community—from volunteer service to workforce training. The *Value of Higher Education* materials can help to guide your messaging, and some can be customized to communicate your institution's unique value proposition.

Business officers are well-positioned to articulate the value of colleges and universities to students, communities, and employers—and many tell NACUBO that communicating college costs is an increasingly important part of their jobs. We hope these materials will be valuable in accomplishing these important goals. ◆