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1 – DROPOUTS ARE THE REAL PROBLEM

About 1 in 4 high school students does not graduate from high school with his or her class. Nearly 4 in 10 minority students do not graduate with their class. The total number of high-school dropouts annually is presently about 3,030,000, or about 8,300 per day. So [writes](#) Warren Beatty (no, not the actor) at americanthinker.com.

[Among dropouts](#): [two sources]

- US jobs a high school dropout is not eligible for is presently about 90%.
- High school dropouts commit about 75% of crimes in the US.
- Among adults over 25 without a high school diploma in 2011, the unemployment rate is 14.1%, versus 9.4% for those who did not drop out.
- Average amount of money a high school graduate will earn more than a dropout in a lifetime is \$260,000.
- Median earnings for full time workers age 25 and older who did not have a high school diploma in 2008 was \$24,300, versus \$33,800 for those who did not drop out.
- Getting just one student to not drop out would mean an average of more than \$200,000 in higher tax revenues and lower government expenditures over his or her lifetime.

- If half of the 1.3 million dropouts from the Class of 2010 had graduated from high school, they could have generated:
 - \$5.3 billion in increased earnings
 - \$4.2 billion in increased spending
 - \$6.7 billion in increased Gross National Product (GDP)
 - \$499 million in increased state tax revenue

It's clear that the life of a dropout is not going to be as good as a person who is willing to get educated. Society is also rendered poorer. If the number of high school dropouts in each age cohort was cut in half, the government would reap \$45 billion via extra tax revenues and reduced costs of public health, of crime and justice, and in welfare payments.

Regarding lifetime earnings and taxes paid, it is clear that dropouts don't do as well, and their tax payments are much lower. Regarding crime, in all major crime categories, the percentages are lower for those who did not drop out. Quite a bit more is spent on Medicare and Medicaid coverage for dropouts.

The number of people receiving food stamps has, since 2009, [increased from](#) about 28 million to over 47 million, a 70% increase from 2009 to 2013. Why is this important? Because high school dropouts make up nearly half the heads of households on welfare.

Dropouts are the real problem, concludes Beatty.

Trend Analysis That Builds Business Decisions

2 – THE AVERAGE COLLEGE FRESHMAN READS AT 7TH GRADE LEVEL

The average US college freshman reads at a seventh grade level, according to Renaissance Learning's latest report on what American students in grades 9-12 read, whether assigned or chosen. So [reports](#) Maggie Lit at campusreform.org.

The study also found that most high school graduates don't do much with mathematics past

the eighth-grade level, compared to students in other high-achieving countries.

Lack of "difficulty and complexity" in high school reading material limits what college professors can assign to students once they enter higher education. Nor are colleges sending a signal to the nation's high schools that high school level reading is needed for college readiness.

3 – SKILLS GAP FOUND IN COLLEGE GRADUATES

Four in 10 US college students graduate without the complex reasoning skills to manage white-collar work, according to the results of a test of nearly 32,000 students administered at 169 college and universities in 2013 and 2014.

The exam, known as the Collegiate Learning Assessment Plus (administered by the Council for Aid to Education), measures the intellectual gains made between freshman and senior year. The test doesn't cover subject-area knowledge; rather, it assesses things like critical thinking, analytical reasoning, document literacy, writing and communication – essentially mimicking the baseline demands for professionals.

Results show that on average, students make strides during college in their ability to reason, but because so many start at such a deficit, many graduate without the ability to read a scatterplot, construct a cohesive argument or identify a logical fallacy. The 40% of students tested who didn't

meet a standard deemed "proficient" were unable to distinguish the quality of evidence in building an argument or express the appropriate level of conviction in their conclusion.

The test comes at a time of rising tuition and student debt and a broad rethinking of the value of a college degree in a changing job market, [reports](#) Douglas Belkin in *The Wall Street Journal*.

The results are consistent with the work of Richard Arum, co-author of *Academically Adrift* and *Aspiring Adults Adrift*, which chronicle the paucity of studying and intellectual development on college campuses and the consequences after graduation.

A survey of business owners released by the American Association of Colleges and Universities also found that nine out of 10 employers judge recent college graduates as poorly prepared for the workforce in such areas as critical thinking, communication and problem solving.

4 – TEN REASONS "FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE" IS A ROTTEN IDEA

Joy Pullman gives [ten reasons](#) why free community college is a rotten idea:

1. This Is Stealing

It's completely unfair to take money from

people who worked for it to hand it to other people who didn't.

2. No One Owes Anyone a College Education

Message to high school kids: Random people

- Market and industry analysis
- Strategic business direction
- Growth dynamics

- Trend identification and analysis
- Keynotes and presentations
- Proprietary research and reports

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- the government points a gun at to collect taxes don't owe you anything. You owe society things.
- 3. Turning Things into Entitlements Makes Them Crappy and Expensive**
Socializing something irresistibly drives down quality and drives up prices.
 - 4. Four of 5 Attendees Don't Graduate Community College**
That's right. In the six years after beginning to attend community college, [only 21 percent of students graduate with a two-year degree](#). Not a really impressive track record that bears rewarding.
 - 5. Grandma's Eighth-Grade Education Could Kick Your Community College in the Teeth**
Take a look at [this 1912 eighth-grade entrance exam](#) for high school. Some parts are archaic, so just look at the grammar or geography sections. Think people who read at a seventh grade level can comprehend the test, much less pass it? Me neither.
 - 6. How Is It Merciful to Trap All Young People in School Longer?**
If community college becomes the new high school, students who have better things to do will be penalized for not wasting another two years doing the same thing all their peers are.
 - 7. Everybody Can Afford Community College Already**
The White House [estimates](#) that the average cost of a year of community college is \$3,800. Assume a summer job and school-year part-time job and continuing to live at mom and dad's house. A 40-hour, minimum-wage job over 12 weeks of summer will earn a tax-free \$3,480 (tax-free because no one earning this little pays taxes). A 15-hour-a-week, minimum-wage job over the year's other 40 weeks will bring in \$4,350. That doesn't include any extra hours worked over other breaks such as Christmas break. So, college covered. And that's only for people who have to pay sticker price. Almost nobody does. In fact, [students from low-income families typically pay zero already](#).
 - 8. The College Bubble Is Just About to Burst and Save Us**
A rising number of young people are finding ways to get into jobs they enjoy that can support them without a forced trek through college [see our item #5 below].
 - 9. The Economy Doesn't Need This**
Of the 30 occupations that the US Department of Labor projects to see the greatest total growth by 2022, only 10 typically need some sort of postsecondary education, and several of those require less than an associate's degree. Most of the new jobs will require a high school diploma or less.
 - 10. Does Anyone Remember We're Suffocating in Government Debt?**
[Our national debt stands at \\$18.1 trillion](#) and counting. That's \$56,500 for every single person living in this country. Massive debt [is a huge damper on a national economy](#), and thus the life prospects of the people living in it. That's me and you and our kids.
- It is no help to young people to assume more public debt on their behalf and at decades of compounding interest to finance yet more entitlements to crush the economy they will enter. It's mean. It's time for politicians to stop "helping" us by spending money we don't have for programs we don't need. That includes college for all. Our nation needs drastic spending and program cuts and more pathways to career opportunities than a generic degree, not more fantastical spending binges with other people's money.

Consulting in:

- Market and industry analysis
- Strategic business direction
- Growth dynamics

Providing:

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Trend Analysis That Builds Business Decisions

5 – DEGREES FROM TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS ARE NO LONGER THE ONLY PATH INTO THE MIDDLE CLASS

President Obama has proposed making two years of community college tuition free for responsible students. Two years gets a student closer to an associate's degree and halfway to a bachelor's degree, and college completion is the gateway to social mobility. All good things, right?

Not quite, [writes](#) Michelle Weise in *The Wall Street Journal*. Community college is great if it helps you get a bachelor's degree, but only one in five students attending these institutions goes on to earn the degree within six years according to [federal data](#). In addition, only [21%](#) of first-time, full-time students earn an associate's degree within three years, and tuition is not the main obstacle to the completion of a degree for low-income students.

Census Bureau data reveal that for most students with some college and no degree, it actually pays – in pure earnings premiums – to pursue a professional certification or educational certificate instead of a stand-alone associate's degree. Continues Weise:

“Ask [Facebook](#), [Google](#) and [AT&T](#) why they're partnering with Udacity to build programs in Big Data and Data Science and Computer Science. Ask [Infosys](#) why it partnered with Wayne County Community College District in 2012 to build a Software Engineering Boot Camp in Detroit through which plumbers, unemployed auto workers and a casino waitress were able to get the skills to take advantage of opportunities at companies like Compuware, GalaxE.Solutions and Kimberly Group. Ask Dev Bootcamp and other coding bootcamps why a company like [Adobe](#) is recruiting talent directly from them.

The students emerging from these programs aren't necessarily earning degrees, but they're getting jobs. As [reported](#) in this newspaper,

coding bootcamps, for instance, boast anywhere from 63% to 99% job attainment rates – stronger than the 57% placement rate of law-school graduates, according to the American Bar Association ...

We should turn our attention to innovations springing up in alternative credentials, competency-based programs and micro-certifications that validate what a student actually knows and can do. This marketplace of non-degree credentials, according to Georgetown University's [Center on Education and the Workforce](#), is a \$500 billion industry.

Given this investment in informal credentialing, how can the country shift the emphasis away from a degree as the sole proxy for talent? That's the public-policy question we should be asking.

Continued focus on a college degree loses sight of the needs of most first-generation, low-income and minority students. These students will miss out on the effects of Mr. Obama's proposed reform. Community-college tuition is already free through [grant aid](#) for most students in the bottom half of the income distribution.

No one wants to further stratify higher education by race and class – but we need to be cognizant of the more than [91 million people](#) with high-school degrees and some college who could significantly increase their earning power by attaining an alternative credential. Those pursuing and acquiring alternative credentials are typically low-income students with parents with an education of less than a bachelor's degree.

College is not the only path into the middle class. It's time to think strategically about how alternative credentials might serve as a powerful lever for upward mobility.”