**PROP CASE**

**My partners and I affirm the resolution: College Should Be Free.**

**Contention 1 – Free college would decrease the student loan burden.**

**Most students must take out student loans to attend college.**

* **10 million student loans issued annually.** (Louise Gaille, Financial Writer, 2018, [https://www.vittana.org/](https://vittana.org/))  From 2011-2015, the amount of student loan debt associated with college attendance rose by 39%, reaching $1.3 trillion. Student loans are the most common type of financial aid that is requested by college students. More than 10 million students take out loans every year to pay for their tuition and learning costs.
* **Taking out student loans expected. Mary Clare Amselem, Policy Analyst, Washington Times,** [**https://www.washingtontimes.com/**](https://www.washingtontimes.com/)**)** Colleges expect students to take out loans. The increasingly hefty price tag attached to college tuition reflects the fact that colleges have no incentive to keep their prices low because students can so easily take out massive loans from Washington.
* **Student loan payments affect quality of life decades later. (Abigail Johnson Hess, Multimedia Reporter CNBC, 2022,** [**https://www.cnbc.com**](https://www.cnbc.com)**).** According to CNBC + Acorn’s recently released Invest in You Student Loan Survey conducted by Momentive, 81% of people with student loans say they’ve had to delay one or more key life milestones because of their debt. The survey found that among student loan borrowers, 42% delay paying off other loans, 40% delay investing money, 38% delay saving for retirement, 35% delay travel, 33% delay buying a home, 16% delay having a baby, 14% delay getting married and 12% delay finding a new job.

**Free college would eliminate need for student loans.**

* **Free college is the superior alternative. (Lumina Foundation, 2016,** [**https://www.luminafoundation.org/**](https://www.luminafoundation.org/)**)** Providing tuition free opportunities at public colleges and universities is far superior than the typical hodgepodge of aid packages and loans cobbled together by many students. It is easily understood by students and their families, it provides certainty, and it builds on the nation’s history of providing free public education.

**Impact – Decreased financial burden would improve lives.**

* **Free college would decrease stress for busy students. When stressed financially, concentration and productivity decline dramatically. This is exceptionally true for college students trying to work, afford housing, and live while attending and paying for classes. When we take away the financial burden, students can put their concentration where it should be, focus on their studies and put their energy into their education.**
* **Free college would reduce anxiety. (Imed Bouchrika, PhD, Chief Data Scientist/Head of Content, 2021,** [**www.research.com**](http://www.research.com/)**) Free college would decrease anxiety. While college is increasingly necessary, it is also increasingly unaffordable. Student debt takes a toll on mental health and is cited as one of the reasons why college should be free. One study found that 9 out of 10 borrowers experience significant anxiety due to their loan burden. Eliminating the debt burden through free college would encourage students to pursue post-secondary education, which is essential to the post-industrial, creative economy.**
* **Student lives would greatly improve. (Matthew Lynch, Staff Writer,** [**www.theedadvocate.org/**](http://www.theedadvocate.org/)**) Students would have better lives without loans. Instead of taking the first, low-paying job that came along to desperately find the cash to start repaying loans, students would hold out for the perfect job where their talents and education could be best utilized. Instead of the 22 million young adults living at home with their parents, those kids would invest in their housing and start contributing to that industry faster.**

**Contention 2 – Free college would create a better educated workforce.**

**Workforce not prepared for jobs, especially in tech fields.**

* Computer technology may have the capability to automate processes, but it also requires a higher level of cognitive and non-cognitive competencies to optimally deliver services. College is believed to be the perfect training ground for all the individual who would eventually join the workforce.
* **(Editors at The Scientific American, 2014,** [**https://www.scientificamerican.com/**](https://www.scientificamerican.com/)**)** The National Science Foundation has long recognized the importance of two-year schools as training grounds for high-tech industries such as biotechnology and nanotechnology. Graduates go on to careers in the laboratories and the command centers of nuclear power plants.
* **Future employment depends on college.** (**Michael Horne, Senior Contributor, 2019,** [**https://www.forbes.com/**](https://www.forbes.com/)**)** Given that 65% of all jobs in the economy will soon require postsecondary education and training beyond high school, according to Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, why not emulate our past and make public colleges free and universal.

**Free college is key for a better educated workforce.**

* **Public action for free college creates better workforce. (Lumina Foundation, 2016,** [**https://www.luminafoundation.org/**](https://www.luminafoundation.org/)**)** The case for public action is clear as communities struggle to position their workforce to compete successfully in an increasingly demanding and global marketplace. States and communities with the highest levels of educational attainment are the places that are winning in this competitive global economy. Business climate matters, but the percentage of a state’s workforce with a college degree or occupational certificate matters most.

**Impact – Free college would lead to better society.**

* **Increases world economy and job growth. (Imed Bouchrika, PhD, Chief Data Scientist/Head of Content, 2021,** [**www.research.com**](http://www.research.com/)**) Global upskilling increases world economy. College education has the potential to drive major change by equipping students with lifelong learning skills and competencies. A report by the World Economic Forum highlights the crucial role of post-secondary education in global upskilling. Wide-scale investment in upskilling has the potential to increase the global domestic product (GDP) by$6.5 trillion by 2030 and create 5.3 million new jobs globally.**
* **Leads to greater career satisfaction. (Pew Research Center, 2016,** [**www.pewresearch.org**](http://www.pewresearch.org)**) Among young adults, though, there is a sharp divide by education. Those with at least a bachelor’s degree are about twice as likely as those with less education to say their job is a career (41%, compared with 21% of those with some college experience and 22% of those with a high school diploma or less). These groups with lower education are more likely to say their job is just to get them by.**
* **Free college benefits society. Considering that 6 out of 10 jobs require post-secondary education, the overwhelming increase in our nation’s poverty percentage is also troubling. Continuing with the idea that more education will spur even more innovation and economic growth, the offering of free post-secondary education will benefit society long after graduation.**

**Contention 3 - Free college leads to better economy**

**Students currently graduating with enormous debt burden.**

* **Students leave college in great debt. (Melanie Hanson, Research Analyst & Senior Editor, 2022** [**https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-statistics**](https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-statistics)**)** (In 2022,) the average federal student loan debt balance is $37,667 while the total average balance (including private loan debt) may be as high as $40,274.
* **Graduate student loan debt is massive. (Abigail Johnson Hess, Multimedia Reporter CNBC 2021, https://www.cnbc.com)** While just 25% of student loan borrowers went to graduate school, these students hold about half of all outstanding student debt... it is $66,300 for an MBA, $71,000 for a master’s degree, $145,500 for a law degree and $201,490 for a medical degree.

**Students earn more/stimulate economy if there is no student loan burden.**

* **Free college creates economic stimulation.** If people were to graduate without debt, they would immediately be able to begin earning, saving, and spending, thus, stimulating the economy. And as an increase in expenditures creates an increase in demand, there becomes a need for more workers, which will create more jobs
* **Free college increases earnings.** As college students graduate without debt, this would give them the ability to earn, save and spend immediately, which could stimulate the economy. This spending will create more demand and more employment opportunities, a significant economic impact of free college as claimed by free tuition advocates. A recent study found that free college leads to an increase in degree completion and postgraduate earnings.
* **College graduates earn more money. (Danielle Gagon, freelance higher education writer, 2022,** [**https://www.snhu.edu/**](https://www.snhu.edu/)**)** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers with a bachelor’s degree earn $524 more per week than workers with only a high school diploma – an increase of more than $27,000 per year. If your professional career lasts 40 years, that could mean you have the earning potential of $1 million more than a worker without a postsecondary education.

**Impact – Free college would improve economy**

* **Reduces government expenditures. (Philip Trostel Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center & School of Economics, 2015,** [**https://www.luminafoundation.org/**](https://www.luminafoundation.org/)**) With less poverty, lower impact on government. The lower incidences of poverty, unemployment, disability, etc. associated with college attainment also reduce government expenditures on public assistance and social insurance, which benefit others by freeing government resources for other public services and/or reducing taxes.**
* **Local and global economies increase. (Kelly Dilworth, Personal Finance Expert, 2022,** [**https://www.thebalance.com/**](https://www.thebalance.com/)**) Morley Winograd, President of the Campaign for Free College Tuition, points to the economic and tax benefits that result from the higher wages of college graduates. "For government, it means more revenue…the more a person earns, the more they will pay in taxes. Also, the country's economy gets better because the more skilled the workforce this country has, the better [it’s] able to compete globally." Local economies benefit from a more highly educated, better-paid workforce because higher earners have more to spend.**
* **Decreases poverty. One out of every 6.5 high school graduates without college lived in poverty. The incidence of poverty was 27 percent less for those with some college but no degree compared to high school graduates without college. The poverty rate for associate degree holders was barely half of the rate for high school graduates. Holders of bachelor’s degrees but without advanced degrees were about 3.5 times less likely to be in living in poverty. Clearly, college attainment substantially reduces the risk of low income.**

**Answers for Pro Contention 1: Free college would decrease the student loan burden**

* **Tuition breaks mostly go to wealthy students**. **(Bryce Covert, Contributor, 2019,** [**https://www.thenation.com/**](https://www.thenation.com/)**)** Right now, the government’s money flows largely to well-off students. After student loans, the biggest chunk of student aid is delivered through the tax code. In 2012 the federal government gave $34 billion in tax breaks, a billion more than it spent on Pell Grants for those in financial need. And most of that money is going to the wealthiest families. In 2013, families that made $100,000 or more a year captured more than half of the tuition and fees deduction as well as the exemption for dependent students.
* **Free college leads to federal government take over. (Shirin Ali & Adam Barnes, Contributors, 2022,** [**https://thehill.com/**](https://thehill.com/)**)** Yet some who opposed Biden’s plan argued that free tuition could effectively cede control of higher education to the federal government. If you go down a path where the federal government is paying the bulk of the costs, you’re really telling the federal government that they now control the system.
* **Better communication for existing funding needed, not free college**. In one academic year over $2 billion in federal student grants go unclaimed. Colleges could do a better job of communicating how tuition costs can be paid for through various financial aid programs and awards, emphasizing that higher education needs to be more transparent.
* **Students will still owe expensive fees. (Jessica Dickler, 2022, Personal Finance Writer,** [**https://www.cnbc.com/**](https://www.cnbc.com/)**)** Further, in most cases the money does not cover fees, books, or room and board, which are all costs that lower-income students struggle with, and diverting funds toward free tuition could come at the expense of other operations on campus, including hiring and retaining faculty and administrators.
* **A free college plan would be unfair**. Under a federal free college plan, factors such as demographics in each state and the varying degree to which states invest in higher education would create an uneven playing field of winners and losers.

**Answers for Pro Contention 2 – Free college would create a better educated workforce.**

* **Would decrease education.** Factors such as the quality of faculty as well as student preparedness are crucial if post-secondary education is to deliver its perceived benefits. The infusion of money may benefit students by lessening the financial burden of going to college, but it does not ensure quality at all levels. Making college accessible could lead to compromising the quality of education. This would defeat the purpose of policies that seek to provide free college for the benefit of society.
* **Free college unable to create a properly educated workforce**. **(Sylvain Kalache, co-founder of the Holberton School, 2019,** [**https://www.cnbc.com/**](https://www.cnbc.com/)**)** Current proposals instead present surface-level solutions that ignore the underlying root cause of the student debt crisis: the misalignment of expectations between schools (subject matter mastery) and their students (acquisition of skills to get a good job). This mismatch affects students’ ability to fully participate in and help cultivate the future of work. This is not a problem isolated to the technology industry. It’s systemic.
* **Free college can’t provide employer knowledge.** With ever changing skill sets needed, curriculums need to be constantly updated. Employers are uniquely positioned to help schools anticipate the rapidly changing jobs market to come. They are the direct beneficiaries of a skilled labor force. Employers should step up their involvement and investment in preparing students and workers for the future.
* **Free college hurts other workforce initiatives**. (Joe English, founder, Hope in a Box, an education nonprofit based in New York, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/>) Unfortunately, free college would fund all degrees equally, throwing tax dollars at diplomas that do not always bolster graduates’ economic prospects. The trillion-dollar price tag crowds out other effective workforce initiatives…when the government creates pathways for certain fields, it discourages other pursuits.

**Answers for Pro Contention 3 - Free college leads to better economy**

* **Free college does not ensure economic growth. (Imed Bouchrika, PhD, Chief Data Scientist/Head of Content, 2021,** [**www.research.com**](http://www.research.com/)**)** While education is a key driver of economic development, free college alone would not ensure growth. Education raises creativity and productivity, requiring substantial investments in institutions. Since the provision of free college could affect the quality of education, free access for all might not be able to provide the competencies and skills needed to produce a strong workforce. The government has many competing priorities and free college requires high education subsidies. Unless spending is well-targeted, there is a high possibility of failure in the long-run.
* **Graduates will still have poor paying jobs. (Preston Cooper, Visiting Fellow, James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, 2021,** [**https://www.jamesgmartin.center/**](https://www.jamesgmartin.center/)**)** Not all career-oriented programs at community colleges perform up to standard, either. Ninety percent of certificates in cosmetology yield median earnings below $20,000—well below what a typical high school graduate earns. Even fields with a reputation for high earnings, such as business, do not always deliver. Two in five community college associate’s degrees in business administration have a median payoff below $30,000.
* **Free college would overburden public schools.** Suddenly injecting massive funding into public-sector colleges could result in an immense shift in students from private to public colleges. This would immediately overwhelming state institutions. Faced with a deluge of new students, state colleges would have no choice but to appeal to the state government for millions of dollars in additional permanent funding to handle the influx. New faculty and staff would need to be hired and buildings built to accommodate these new students.
* **Free college will cause painful economic shift**. **(Gary A. Olson, president of Daemen College in New York, 2017,** [**https://universitybusiness.com/**](https://universitybusiness.com/)**)** Collectively, the independent, not-for-profit colleges in New York have an estimated annual economic impact of $79.6 billion. Even small private colleges contribute to the economy. Daemen College, has a student population of just under 3,000 and over 600 employees. We contribute $130 million to the economy annually. If multiple colleges collapse because of the governor’s proposal, the economy would suffer a huge blow as hundreds, if not thousands, of faculty and staff would suddenly be out of work, and tax revenue would shrink.
* **Americans not comfortable with financial burden of free college.** If America were to move to a tuition-free college policy, where would the money come from? The short and simple answer is taxes. Who gets taxed seems to vary based on who is talking, but it seems certain that the upper echelons of American society will see increased taxes if this passes. Or maybe it will all come from Wall Street speculation taxes. The point is, all we know is that someone will pay these dues through taxes. The uncertainty of who will carry the burden is not making many Americans comfortable.

**Opp Case**

**My partners and I negate the resolution: College Should Be Free.**

**Contention One – Free College Causes Economic Harms.**

**Affirming the resolution would be harmful in 3 ways—damaging the free-market college system, creating an underfunded/inept system, and harming state economies. Free college also does not have Senate support.**

* **Free college would damage free market college system. (Beth Akers, author and former senior fellow, Manhattan Institute, 2020,** [**https://www.educationnext.org/**](https://www.educationnext.org/)**)** A free college regime would dampen the market forces that encouraged these innovations. The pull of “free” would divert students away from private colleges and training programs and into the public options. Institutions in the public sector have less incentive to innovate because they have less to gain by improvements in quality and less to lose from falling short. Private colleges that don’t deliver for their students will have to close their doors. That’s a risk that public colleges just don’t face. The public colleges thus don’t have the same need to think of new ways to deliver education more effectively or efficiently.
* **Free college would be underfunded creating worse education**. Government has a track record of underfunding. Its services are unable to efficiently allocate supply to demand. As a result, colleges will become heavily underfunded and crowded. This is demonstrated in France, which runs a “free” system. Its universities are heavily underfunded and unable to satisfy student enrollment. The effect, however, is that education will be of lower quality.
* **Free college funding can harm state economies.** **(Jason Delisle, 2020,** [**https://www.nationalaffairs.com/**](https://www.nationalaffairs.com/)**)** State governments would also face counterproductive incentives under these plans. States that have historically provided relatively little funding to their public universities, like New Hampshire, will have to dramatically ramp up their spending to participate in the free-college programs. Even with federal matching funds, this may prove to be too much of a reach. States on the other end of the spending spectrum, like California, might be more likely to support plans for tuition-free universities to pick up new federal matching funds. If high-tuition states do not opt into the free-college plans and low-tuition states do, the policy may actually exacerbate existing affordability gaps. The federal government would be financing an effort to reduce the cost of college in states where it was already the most affordable while changing nothing in states where it is least affordable.
* **Senate unsure free college will work. (Dan McCue, Editor, 2019, www.thewellnews.com).** U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar has rejected the idea of free public-college, saying it would take a “magic genie” for the federal government to afford such a policy.

**Impact – Free college would hurt the strain and damage the economy.**

* **Free college would strain government resources. (Mary Clare Amselem, Policy Analyst, Washington Times,** [**https://www.washingtontimes.com/**](https://www.washingtontimes.com/)**) Similarly, England had a free college policy between the 1960s and the 1990s. Enrollment soared, straining government revenues. England had to lower resources by 39% per student. England’s free college policy wound up hurting low-income students the most, as schools were forced to cap the number of students admitted. In fact, according to researchers at the National Bureau of Economic Research, “the gap in degree attainment between high- and low-income families more than doubled.”**
* **Free college only changes debt burden to taxpayers. (Michael Horne, Senior Contributor, 2019,** [**https://www.forbes.com/**](https://www.forbes.com/)**) Today’s free college proposals merely charge education, in the form of debt for future generations of taxpayers, rather than change it. Charging education to the future isn’t changing education for the future.**

**Contention Two – Free college not needed; more access for marginalized students is needed instead.**

* **Marginalized students bear greater student debt. (Josh McCormack, 2022, https://salud-america.org/ )** “Research has shown that the fallout of the student debt crisis is disproportionately borne by individual student loan borrowers of color, especially Black and Latinx borrowers,” a study from the Student Borrower Protection Center states. “Building on top of these findings, an emerging body of research conducted by cities has exposed the role this debt plays in exacerbating racial and economic disparities between majority-white and non-white communities, particularly as rates of segregation climb.”

**Revised Pell grants, block grants, and other strategies would increase access for marginalized students.**

* **Changing the Pell Grant system would work. (Anna Helhoski, writer at NerdWallet, 2021,** [**https://apnews.com/**](https://apnews.com/)**)** The Pell Grant program provides students who have demonstrated need with free aid. Though the Pell was meant to cover most college costs, it has not kept up Most experts say doubling the maximum Pell Grant would effectively create free tuition and, in some cases, cover additional expenses.
* **Block grants could help marginalized students. (Owen Daugherty, NASFAA Staff Reporter, 2021,** [**https://www.nasfaa.org/**](https://www.nasfaa.org/)**) I**nstead of a blanket free college proposal, giving states that invest in their own higher education systems a block grant and subsidizing nonprofit institutions that demonstrate supporting low-income students will better reward those trying to ensure access and success for low-income students. A targeted, multi-faceted strategy has a greater chance of succeeding in politically troubled times, and offers future generations of students the long-term college affordability they deserve.
* **A revised Pell grant would help poorer students only. (Owen Daugherty, NASFAA Staff Reporter, 2021,** [**https://www.nasfaa.org/**](https://www.nasfaa.org/)**)** A targeted approach through investing in the Pell Grant could be more effective since it expands access to higher education for those most in need without subsidizing a degree for wealthy students. As a first-dollar program, any Pell money a student receives above tuition charged can be used to cover other costs of attendance—which include tuition, room and board charges, books, and other expenses. This is an especially important feature for low-income students who attend low-tuition community colleges and regional public universities and for whom non-tuition costs are often the main barrier to accessing the higher education system.
* **Strategic changes could make a big difference. Sara Goldrick-Rab, Ph.D., 2015,** [**www.talkpoverty.org**](http://www.talkpoverty.org)**).** Rigorous studies have shown that reducing the cost of community college by even $1,000 a year results in substantial increases across the board. More low-income students enroll directly from high school who may not have or transfer to four-year colleges. And the students who would not have enrolled—except for the fact that community college became more affordable—are more than 20 percent more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree within eight years of high school graduation. All that for a $1,000 discount? Imagine what those numbers would be if the first two years of community college—or any college, as Senator Bernie Sanders recently proposed—were made free.

**Impact – Revised system would make college accessible for marginalized students.**

* **Better access and graduation rates. Low-income students stand to benefit from free community college in real and measurable ways that will increase their access, boost their persistence, and raise their graduation rates. Since the president’s plan is a “first-dollar” plan, low-income students would receive the greatest subsidies. Students would not have to give up their Pell grants; instead, because tuition would be free, Pell grant funding could be used to meet costs other than tuition. It is predicted that low-income and moderate-income students would realize greater gains than their more affluent classmates**
* **Increased support funds would increase graduation rates. A substantial boost to the maximum Pell Grant would allow these under-resourced institutions to achieve two goals. The first is to reduce net tuition as the nation emerges from the pandemic. Of equal importance, these schools could repurpose some of their own aid spending into investing more in student services and support, which in turn will help Pell recipients complete their degrees at a higher rate.**

**Contention Three – Free college would devalue degrees.**

* **Free college would lower standards. (Paul Boyce, Business Economics graduate & editor boycewire.com, 2019,** [**https://fee.org/**](https://fee.org/)**)** “Free college” will attract even more students, putting pressure on public colleges to take them on. The talk of lowering standards further is deeply worrying. By making college available to the masses, it defeats the goal of creating a well-educated workforce. It attracts students who would be more suited to apprenticeships or other forms of on-the-job training.
* **Free college devalues due to less personal responsibility. (Louise Gaille, Financial Writer, 2018,** [**https://vittana.org/**](https://vittana.org/)**)**  Free college could devalue degrees in other ways as well, from students deciding to cut classes because they have no personal investment to being less involved with their studies. There is a strong possibility that free college would encourage more reckless in college learning, not less.
* **Students devalue free college. (Amber Kelly, Howard College, 2016,** [**https://www.mrt.com/**](https://www.mrt.com/)**)** Beyond that, “free to the student” college devalues a college education. At the present, college is a time and money commitment. Even financial aid requires students to attend class and maintain certain grades or it goes away. For many students that is a motivator. If there is no cost, the investment of the student decreases exponentially. Taking money out of the equation on the student side lessens the investment and the value of the education he or she is receiving. A college education is an investment in a student’s future if we buy into the principle that a college diploma is a valuable commodity.

**Free college creates a subpar system.**

* **Free college leads to strained system and lower graduation rates. (Kimberlee Josephson, Associate Dean, 2021,** [**https://universitybusiness.com/**](https://universitybusiness.com/)**)** For those who end up attending subsidized semesters, bargaining power for course offerings will be absent and college resources will be pre-determined and fixed. Such concerns were previously raised in an analysis by Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce regarding Hillary Clinton’s free-college plan. The study determined that premier institutions would be more selective about applicants (given that those not chosen now had free options to retreat to) and a swell in enrollments to government funded institutions would occur resulting in overcrowding, depleting personalized attention and resources, and resulting in slower and lower graduation rates overall.

**Impact – Free college decreases educational quality and teaching.**

* **Free college decreases educational quality. The evidence from countries that have and previously had free college systems, such as Germany and England, is that pupil funding typically doesn’t keep up with the costs required for those institutions to remain competitive on a global stage. Governments tend to place caps on enrollment and caps on per pupil funding over time—and so the colleges decline in quality.**
* **Free colleges hurt university standings. What’s so interesting is that 120 years ago, German universities dominated the list of top universities in the world—eight of the 10 leading universities in the world were in Germany, according to Harvard Business School Dean Nitin Nohria. Today there isn’t a single German university in the top 10 worldwide, and to find just one university from Germany, you typically must look outside of the top 50.**
* **Free college leads to less effective teaching. Cutting spending on other areas, such as education research and development to accommodate more students could also compromise the quality of teaching. Proponents of education becoming a commodity through free college argue that making education more accessible makes it less valuable. England’s experience with free college revealed that over time, education quality declined.**

**Answers for Con Contention One – Free College is an economic burden.**

* **College is always a solid investment. (Philip Trostel Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center & School of Economics, 2015,** [**https://www.luminafoundation.org/**](https://www.luminafoundation.org/)**)** Although there are legitimate concerns about rising tuition and student debt discouraging potential students from a college education, it is still the case that college is a very worthwhile investment even in just purely financial terms.
* **Decreased defense spending could pay for free college.** In the United States, the estimated cost of paying for free college is about $70 billion per year. That could be achieved with a 10% cut to the defense spending budget and supplemental funding from each state. Although such a shift would create job losses initially, it would also create net opportunities by empowering students to pursue a career that they love.
* **The value of free college is long term gain. (David J. Deming, Professor of Public Policy, and the Director of the Malcom Wiener Center for Social Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, 2019,** [**https://econfip.org/**](https://econfip.org/)**)**  The short-run cost of expanding access to higher education is potentially large. Yet the long-run cost is much smaller. This is because education is an investment that requires up-front spending, but pays back benefits over time. Policies that increase college attainment can pay for themselves – or even yield net benefits to the taxpayer – because college-goers earn more after graduation and pay higher taxes.
* **Education’s return comes later in life. (David J. Deming, Professor of Public Policy, and the Director of the Malcom Wiener Center for Social Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, 2019,** [**https://econfip.org/**](https://econfip.org/)**)**  Education – unlike many transfer and social assistance programs – is an investment that yields returns later in life. Education seems expensive, because the costs are easy to measure and are paid up-front. The benefits of education, while large, are long-run and varied.
* **States need to resume college funding.** (Michael Leachman, Vice President for State Fiscal Policy, et al 2019, [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)) Long-term cuts to per-student higher education funding threaten affordability, access, and quality at public two- and four-year colleges across the states. Not only should states direct additional resources into supporting public colleges and universities and reverse the long-term trend of disinvestment, but they can also implement smarter state financial aid policies and ensure that dollars go to the schools that need it most.

**Answers to Con Contention Two – Free college not needed; more access for marginalized students is needed instead.**

* **Expanding Pell Grants lacks appeal. (Anna Helhoski, writer at NerdWallet, 2021,** [**https://apnews.com/**](https://apnews.com/)**)** Free college proposals are simultaneously blasted for not being generous enough and being too generous to students without demonstrated need. These criticisms make it more difficult to attain approval among both lawmakers and the public. Expanding the existing Pell Grant program could work to provide free tuition, but it lacks the appeal of a new and “free” program. “From a messaging perspective, saying the Pell (Grant amount) is going up by, say, $2,000 might not have the same impact on students as ‘Your tuition is covered.’”
* **Enough funds for marginalized already exists.** Simply adding more money won’t eliminate the information barrier that stands between many low-income students and college enrollment. A better idea would be to automate the process of federal financial aid so that grant awards and loan eligibility can be retrieved from a website at any time. This might require some tweaks in how eligibility is determined, but it would be worth the cost to ensure that every potential college student understands exactly what they can expect to spend on a degree. Some students would be surprised to find that “free college” has been true for them all along.
* **The Pell Grant system already benefits marginalized students. (Chris West, Communications Fellow at the Civitas Institute 2018,** [**https://www.jamesgmartin.center/**](https://www.jamesgmartin.center/)**)** Clearly, low-income students are not the ones benefiting from this program. It’s just the opposite: free college programs disproportionately benefit students from middle-class and wealthier backgrounds because those students do not qualify for federal Pell Grants or other assistance. The American Association of Community Colleges estimates that 25 percent of community colleges students—especially those from low-income backgrounds—can already attend for free or nearly free due to the availability of other federal, state, and institution aid programs.
* **More help is needed than free tuition. (Leah Asmelash, contributor, CNN, 2022,** [**https://www.cnn.com/**](https://www.cnn.com/)**)** Lower-income students still face other financial barriers, like the costs of books, meals plans, transportation and other categories that fall outside of tuition.
* **Pell grant increase won’t solve all problems. Catharine Bond Hill, Managing Director, 2021, www.sr.ithaka.org)** Some policy makers assume that increasing Pell will lead to a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the net price that students pay for college, but this fails to take into account the responses of both institutions and students to having access to greater grant funding, responses which can improve student outcomes more than a reduction in net price would do.

**Answers to Con Contention Three – Free college would devalue degrees.**

* **Evidence shows the fundamental value of college degrees. (Philip Trostel Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center & School of Economics, 2015,** [**https://www.luminafoundation.org/**](https://www.luminafoundation.org/)**)** College graduates certainly do benefit from their degrees, at least on average. The substantial monetary payoff to investment in college education has been demonstrated in countless reports. Even if the only benefit was the creation of human capital and higher future earnings, college education is a great investment opportunity for most high school graduates.
* **More postsecondary education benefits the workforce. (Louise Gaille, Financial Writer, 2018,** [**https://vittana.org/**](https://vittana.org/)**)**   Making college free would create a unique change in the value of an education from an employer standpoint. Those who want to attend a private, 4-year institution would still be able to do so. There would be more value found in a degree from such an institution when compared to one offering free tuition. At the same time, however, students with talents and skills, without money, would still be able to compete for work. Those who want added value with a degree would still be able to get it under this type of structure.
* **No substitute for a degree.** The benefits of participating in high-impact practices such as writing intensive courses, undergraduate research, community service projects and internships are especially promising for historically underserved students who will make up a large fraction of tomorrow’s workers and community leaders.
* **College graduates fare better in tough job markets. (Association of Public & Land Grant Universities, 2022, www.aplu.org)** Recent college graduates also weathered the Great Recession better than their peers with a high school diploma. When unemployment reached its peak in 2010, recent college graduates experienced an unemployment rate of 6.9 percent, compared with a jobless rate of 15.8 percent for all young workers. In 2022, the jobless rate for bachelor’s degree holders is less than 2 percent.
* **Innovative thinking is always valued by employers. (Ashley Stahl, Contributor, 2015, www.forbes.com)** 95% of employers are looking for candidates whose skills translate into out-of-the-box thinking and innovation, as many of the jobs being filled today come with challenges that are more complex than in the past. Perhaps this explains why Silicon Valley is starting to favor employees who studied liberal arts, versus those who took the more “typical” tech path as software engineers. Soft skills are the skills of the future.