



The Challenge of Change

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The times are changing for higher education. Rapid advancements in technology create an ever-shifting landscape institutions must navigate. And institutions have changed, too, especially as CIOs play a more and more prominent role on campuses as strategic partners. And yet, according to the 2017 Gartner CIO Survey, higher education lags behind other industry sectors when it comes to incorporating digital considerations into strategy and planning. Institutions must actively seek out innovative solutions to tackle new challenges as they appear.

Higher-education organizations must be able to adapt to the changing needs of student populations. As high-school graduation rates continue to decline (according to the National Center for Education Statistics), institutions must rethink their approach to recruiting, identifying, and engaging new target audiences both domestically and internationally. And they must be prepared to support these new students in different ways than they've become accustomed.

With Workday Student, institutions use a full array of data to uncover new recruitment opportunities and engage with untapped markets, allowing admissions officers to analyze campaign effectiveness, yield, and net cost per prospect using real-time analytics accessible from personalized dashboards. Workday Student enables collaboration among admissions, financial aid, and finance administrators to create the right mix of revenue and tuition discounting, leveraging important student aid dollars to shape the best possible entering class.

Students are now asking colleges and universities to justify the significant investment students are required to make. While previously institutions were judged on the quality and quantity of their student populations—SAT scores, GPAs, and so on—judgements of quality are now shifting toward ROI—or rather, the students' Return on (Educational) Investment. In order to justify the steep increases in tuition, students want to know about graduate outcomes, including job placement and starting salaries. Higher-education institutions must have systems in place that set students up for success in an environment where current students are failing to thrive and accountability is increasingly important. Understanding the unique needs of entering students and designing programs to meet those needs requires the ability to analyze historical admissions, student aid, and academic records data to unlock trends in student success and persistence. With Workday, data resides in a single location, allowing institutions to use real-time and historic data traditionally siloed in disparate systems and data repositories. This results in insightful and actionable analytics that gives administrators all the information they need to design success strategies and programs and more effectively communicate with their diverse student populations.

It is exciting to think about how technology can empower institutions to address their most pressing challenges. And with the potential for huge changes in regulatory and funding policy coming from a new federal administration, institutions must select new technologies with agility and adaptability in mind. Workday Student is working with dozens of diverse institutions to tackle critical issues on campuses, enabling institutions to identify and seize opportunity in a world where the only certainty is change.

Sincerely,

Liz Dietz

Vice President, Workday Student

Introduction

Change is to be expected in higher education, a field devoted to discovery and learning. But the pace of change today creates major challenges for college leaders and instructors.

Longstanding economic models are eroding for public and private institutions alike. Scrutiny from government officials, accreditors, parents and the news media are on the rise. Demands that colleges demonstrate student learning continue to grow. And students, parents and lawmakers insist that colleges do more to assure that graduates are prepared for the work force.

The articles in this compilation explore colleges' struggles and strategies as they grapple with these and other issues. *Inside Higher Ed* welcomes your comments on these pieces, and your ideas for future coverage.

--The Editors
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Drew's Downgrade

BY RICK SELTZER

Ratings agency dings small university for spending big after a new president took over. As focus shifts to a budget deficit, question becomes whether Drew can cut spending while expanding enrollment.

MaryAnn Baenninger inherited a budget deficit when she came to Drew University in the summer of 2014. The next year, the small private university's deficit grew.

And that was by choice.

Drew spent more as Baenninger sought to put money into the university's campus, students and employees. The university issued its first raises in about five years. It hired a respected enrollment guru and increased its financial aid spending. It renovated the dining hall.

The spending was a change for Drew, a pricey university to the west of New York City in Madison, N.J., which [had been preparing](#) for budget cuts following several years of dropping enrollment before Baenninger arrived. But, according to Baenninger and members of her administration, the spending helped to keep talented staff and faculty members from leaving, improve student retention and increase applications from prospective students.

"We were losing kids on the food, for God's sake," Baenninger said.



"Our salaries were going downhill. Now they're going up."

Recently, however, the spotlight has shifted to Drew's deteriorating financial situation. Moody's Investors Service drove home that point in March 2017 by downgrading Drew's bonds for the second time in 15 months. Moody's dropped one series of bonds from Ba3 to B2 and two others from Ba3 to B3, sink-

ing them farther into junk territory and signifying that they are highly speculative.

Moody's pointed to operating deficits that are expected to last longer than previously projected, along with a competitive student market constraining possibilities for short-term revenue growth. It said Drew has no more unrestricted liquidity left and would have to rely on loans

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and distributions from temporarily restricted endowment assets for working capital. Moody's also assigned a negative rating outlook.

"The negative outlook reflects our expectations that the university's financial performance will remain challenged over the next few years, which will continue to erode the remaining spendable cash and investments, making a return to financial stability very difficult," Moody's analysts wrote.

The downgrade came after Drew administrators realized they would be running a deficit for a year longer than they had originally anticipated, according to Baenninger. The university will be carrying deficits into 2021-22.

Now, cuts are clearly necessary, Baenninger said. But she still thinks her strategy of spending early was the right one.

"It is really hard," the president said in an interview. "But what we chose to do -- and I feel very strongly that this is the only way it would work -- we chose to invest first, learn about the institution with our new team and our new CFO. Learn about the institution, and then deploy the cost savings so we weren't inadvertently cutting things that would hurt us more."

The question Baenninger faces now is whether enough fat can be cut from Drew to free money for seemingly competing needs. The university must do more to balance its budget. But it also wants to find



MaryAnn Baenninger, professor and president of Drew University

a way to invest in new programs. At the same time, it needs to prove wrong concerns about the competitive student market by attracting more students and more tuition dollars.

Drew is not alone in those questions -- small liberal arts colleges across the country have been forced to figure out how much they can cut, how much they will have to change and where they can grow to stay afloat in a difficult market. For Drew, Baenninger believes the answer has to involve growth -- even in the midst of coming cuts.

"I still view Drew's structural deficit problems as revenue problems -- that is, over all, we're not spending more than an institution of our type should be spending," Baenninger said. "But particularly because our enrollment wasn't stable and our retention was low -- strikingly low for

an institution of our type -- we weren't bringing in the revenue that we should bring in."

Where to Cut, Where to Invest?

In Baenninger's first year, working under an operating budget she inherited, Drew spent \$84.6 million but only brought in \$73.5 million in revenue. The next year, fiscal 2016, spending rose to \$90.4 million, rising faster than revenue, which increased to \$76.7 million. That means Drew's operating deficit increased by \$2.6 million, from \$11.1 million to \$13.7 million -- the deficit amounted to 15 percent of spending.

With Drew on pace to continue its deficits in the 2016-17, Baenninger has been increasingly discussing cuts and how to financial balance. The way forward will likely include significant administrative cuts, skewing university spending away from its administration and toward academics.

Drew has been offering voluntary early retirements and is [restructuring its academic administration](#) in moves expected to save millions. The university will be keeping a tight capital budget -- it [does not plan](#) any borrowing -- and looking for ways to control benefit costs.

"Our cost-savings plan, which will be unfolding over the next six months, will cause us to be able to create a very, very different cash-flow situation very rapidly," Baenninger said.

At the same time, Drew is evaluat-

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ing programs it can add -- as many as dozens across its three colleges over coming years. It is in the process of adding a media and communications program. And it plans to add to a group of programs that have students spending semesters in New York City.

The university is looking into fields like public health and data science for new undergraduate concentrations. And its Theological School and College of Liberal Arts [have been working with consultants](#) on potential new programs and strategic planning.

"What we are looking to do is create these opportunities that define liberal arts with a career," Baenninger said. "It's not something that sounds particularly innovative or unique, but these are things that Drew didn't do before."

'You Have to Have a Depth of Applicants'

New programs mean little if Drew can't draw students. Perhaps the most crucial part of the university's recovery plans revolve around boosting enrollment and retention. Robert Massa (right), senior vice president for enrollment and institutional planning, is in charge of those tasks.

Massa is known for his work at Dickinson College, in Pennsylvania, where he raised applications, enrollment and revenue at a time when the college had a new president. He's in a situation now that looks strikingly similar. He started working at Drew as a consultant shortly after Baenninger was hired. A few



Robert Massa, senior vice president for enrollment and institutional planning

months later, in February 2015, he signed on full time.

Drew had previously looked at its financial situation and cut from student aid, Massa said. But he believes those financial aid changes brought unintended negative consequences, hurting the university's market position and leading to more students leaving because they had large gaps in their financial aid packages.

Enrollment bottomed out, Massa said. In the fall of 2014, weeks after Baenninger arrived, the first-year freshman class was as small as it had ever been, at 302 students. That was despite a freshman discount rate of 58 percent, well above the [national average for private colleges](#), which is about 50 percent.

Yet when Massa arrived, leaders made the decision to spend more to attract students.

"The only lever I could pull, be-

cause applications had declined, was the financial aid lever," Massa said. "We had made a decision that we needed a critical mass, and the discount, we'd have to drive that up."

The university's first-year tuition discount rate spiked to 67 percent in the fall of 2015. But freshman enrollment rose, too, hitting 357. Total undergraduate enrollment rose from 1,482 in the fall of 2014 to 1,514 in the fall of 2015.

Drew's freshman discount rate and enrollment ticked down slightly for the class that enrolled in fall 2016 to 62 percent and 350 as of the fall. Total undergraduate enrollment came in at 1,589, up from previous years as freshman retention has climbed.

The university has essentially used financial aid to buy more students while still making itself more selective. Its acceptance rate fell from about 70 percent in 2014 and 2015 to 57 percent in 2016.

"I'm not trying to get more applications so we can reject people," Massa said. "The point is, in order to have a deep enough pool to be able to select a class that's both academically qualified and has some financial ability, you have to have a depth of applicants."

Drew can be successful with a higher discount rate than many other private institutions, Massa argues. At about \$47,000 before room, board and fees, [its listed tuition](#) is higher than many other private colleges. So even after discounting, Massa said, Drew's net tuition per student is still about \$1,000 higher

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than a typical private college.

“Our discount rate is high, and I don’t like being in the low 60s,” he said. “But our net revenue per student is higher than average.”

The university’s discount rate will fall in the future, Massa predicted. Still, he thinks it’s unlikely to drop below 55 percent.

For 2017-18, the goal is to bring in a freshman class of about 385, Massa said. Going forward, he thinks the university needs an annual applicant pool of about 4,000 to admit classes at the levels of selectivity he targets. Ideally, Drew would accept 2,000 students to get to 385 or 400 freshmen enrolling each fall. Its overall undergraduate student body would number about 1,750. Add in graduate students, and Drew would then have about 2,300 students, up from about 2,200 today.

Massa has been working to build relationships with high school counselors. He’s recruiting heavily in the New York City metropolitan area and other areas up and down the East Coast.

“I will be honest with you, there is a lot of work to be done,” he said. “It’s a deep hole to dig out of, but I’m actually confident that we can do it.”

The administration still has the backing of the chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dean T. Criares.

Key indicators are moving in the right direction, and the board was looking for someone who was willing to do the work of repositioning Drew for the future when it hired Baenninger, Criares said.

That hasn’t changed with the current financial situation.

“It is my responsibility to be concerned,” Criares said. “And to constantly ask, ‘What if?’ But at the moment, we are cautiously optimistic around the trends that MaryAnn has been able to generate.”

“

We went through a very difficult economic period. I have tremendous sympathy for anybody in the job these days of running a small liberal arts school, because the pressures are worse than they’ve ever been.

”

‘The Pressures Are Worse Than They’ve Ever Been’

Still, observers who know Drew best worry about its current position. The path back will not be easy, said Thomas H. Kean, a former governor of New Jersey who went on to become Drew’s president from 1990 to 2005.

“There have been some problems, and not all of the school’s making,” Kean said. “We went through a very difficult economic period. I have tremendous sympathy for anybody in the job these days of running a small liberal arts school, because the pressures are worse than they’ve ever been.”

Drew was in a similar situation when Kean became president, he said. He also took time to evaluate the circumstances, bring in his own team of administrators and fix the problem, he said.

Kean’s recommendation for Drew today is a heavy emphasis on fund-raising. The university has a strong alumni base, he said.

The market value of Drew’s endowment has taken a major hit of late, falling by 19.1 percent between 2015 and 2016 to \$172.2 million,

[according to annual figures](#) gathered by the National Association of College and University Business Officers and Commonfund. While the

endowment value is still much higher than those of many universities, particularly on a per-student basis, the drop is precipitous.

Kean is quick to say that he believes Drew’s faculty members are dedicated and that the university still offers a top liberal arts education. He also continues to believe in the value of that education, he said.

“I fear for the future of liberal arts colleges in general,” Kean said. “Small ones that do not have major endowments to back them up, that’s a large number of places. And yet, like Drew, there are a lot of very good places, and their loss would be dramatic for the country, and the country would be a much poorer

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place without them.”

Kean said he opted to be open with faculty members about Drew’s problems after he started there. It’s unclear how much Baenninger’s actions will mirror his approach going forward.

Drew’s current president has sent regular communications about the university’s strategic planning, most recently addressing the Moody’s downgrade in separate messages to faculty, staff and students and to alumni.

On campus, Drew’s Faculty Senate has not been meeting regularly in recent years, said Sarah Abramowitz, a professor of mathematics and the chair of Drew’s department of mathematics. She is a representative on an annual planning and budget committee, which Baenninger has

used to help make important decisions.

There are pockets of concern about the financial situation among Drew’s faculty, Abramowitz said. Still, she said the mood on campus is not panicked. Faculty members have known about underlying financial problems for some time.

“Before MaryAnn came, we tried to make budget cuts,” Abramowitz said. “That program was not successful.”

The previous program, which was called off when Baenninger arrived on campus, would have cut academic programs at Drew, even though the university already considered itself to have relatively few programs, Abramowitz said.

Still, faculty knew some sort of cuts would be coming eventu-

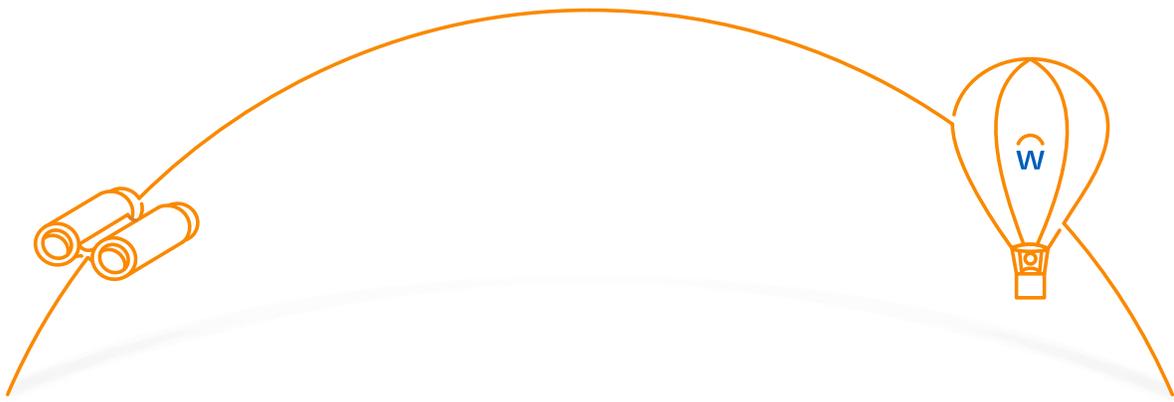
ally, she said. Now, she believes Baenninger will be able to find savings without cuts that could damage academics.

“Nobody has any details, including me,” Abramowitz said. “But I do trust that she’s going to do them in a very sensible way.”

Finding the right mix of cuts is the challenge of the moment. The bottom line is that Drew has not dedicated itself in the past to making necessary sacrifices, according to Baenninger. She thinks there are numerous areas where the university can stem flows of unnecessary spending.

“With most institutions, you see long-term sustained cuts that are eating away at the muscle,” Baenninger said. “Drew needs to eat away at its fat.” ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/31/drew-university-after-spending-attract-more-students-faces-large-deficits>



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3 Years Cost Less Than 4

BY RICK SELTZER

NYU's push to help students graduate in under four years leaves questions about who it helps and how much of a difference it can make at one of the country's most expensive universities.

The idea of a three-year bachelor's degree is nothing new.

But it generally hasn't been promoted at pricey private universities, which tend to attract students with their entire campus experience instead of just the credits being earned. That changed in at least one case in February 2017, when New York University [unveiled a new program](#) it calls NYU Accelerate. The program is designed to clear a way for some students to graduate in less than four years from a university that has long been criticized as one of the most expensive institutions in the country that does not meet students' full financial need.

Other institutions have introduced three-year-degree efforts in the past, notably including the private Wesleyan University [in 2012](#) -- eight graduates out of about 730 completed their degrees in three years in 2016, up from two to three students per year in the years before

that program was put in place. And enterprising, organized students have always been able to graduate in three years from most colleges, but few try to do so. Still, NYU's move is noteworthy in that it reflects an escalating discussion around student costs, even at institutions that had previously seemed largely immune to blowback from increasing student expenses.

Now the larger question remains: Will the three-year-degree program have any significant impact on affordability at an institution [quoting undergraduate cost of attendance](#) at nearly \$72,000 per year on paper? Reactions have varied, with administrators praising the accelerate program and other ideas put in place as innovative measures at an institution that is surprisingly constrained by its per-student endowment levels in a staggeringly high-priced New York City market.



Meanwhile, experts said the affordability efforts do not amount to systematic changes, and some student critics bashed them as gimmicks.

The accelerate program leans heavily on changes to advising and chances for students to maximize the credits in their class schedules. All undergraduate schools at NYU now have acceleration advisers who are ready to discuss transfer and Advanced Placement credits and courses with students.

An academic planning tool will alert students when their academic plans would have them graduating

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in more than four years. Currently, 81 percent of NYU students graduate in four years or less and 84 percent graduate in six years or less. The various schools are also attempting to increase the number of two-credit courses they offer.

Two-credit courses are important, because NYU's full-time tuition covers 12-18 credits, but many students only take 16. Now the idea is that students can pair 18-credit semesters with some summer classes, January term classes and credits from Advanced Placement or community college classes to earn a bachelor's degree in less than four years.

The idea comes as NYU is also pursuing other options to improve its affordability. Faculty members were asked to review textbook requirements, and 1,000 fewer textbooks were required for courses this spring than in the same semester a year before. Students have started an effort to share their unused dining hall meals, and university officials have lowered the number of meals incoming students are required to buy.

The university is making online financial education tools available to students, and it has increased its shuttle service between Brooklyn and Manhattan, which it says saves students money they otherwise would have spent on the subway.

"There is no one silver bullet that can solve the affordability issue for our students," President Andrew Hamilton said in an update on affordability issued in February 2017.

University leaders have also pointed out that tuition and fee increases were trimmed for 2016-17, rising by only 2.9 percent for most undergraduate programs. It was the lowest rate of increase in two decades -- tuition and fees have generally increased by 3.5 percent to 4 percent in recent years, including several years of historically low inflation rates.

The moves represent small slices of total student cost of attendance, especially when compared to the university's quoted tuition and fees of more than \$49,000 for most undergraduate schools. They're still relatively small after factoring in financial aid packages.

NYU did not share its discount rate for 2016-17, but its average net price for full-time beginning students was \$35,106 for 2014-15, according to federal data on price including tuition and fees, books and supplies, and a weighted average for room and board.

Officials say they aren't sure how many students will take advantage of the new accelerate program. But it should be noted that a large number of NYU students are already graduating early -- roughly 20 percent of undergraduates earn their degrees in less than four years.

So in some ways, the accelerate program is less a sea change than it is a formalization of what students were already doing.

"It seemed that we should at least make it clear to people that if they wanted to do it and they were majoring in a subject for which it was

feasible to do it, we would lay out a path," said Ellen Schall, a senior presidential fellow and professor of health policy and management at NYU who chairs the university's Affordability Steering Committee, which is made up of deans, faculty members, students and an administrator. "It's not advice. It's not required. It's not by any means to be imagined that this works for everybody."

Schall listed several other affordability efforts underway at NYU, including a goal of saving \$10 million on administrative efficiencies and finding additional savings in its procurement contracts. The moves can all add up to translate to real savings for the university and for students, she said.

She went on to argue that NYU's per-student endowment is much lower than those of many of the university's peers. NYU's endowment totaled just under \$3.5 billion as of June 30. That translates to about \$70,000 per student. It's also much less per student than elite private universities such as Princeton University, where per-student endowment levels are well over \$2.5 million.

As a result, NYU does not have the financial resources to simply cut its quoted tuition by a large figure like 20 percent, Schall said. It decided to look for significant pain points for students and use that conversation to generate additional ideas for increasing affordability. The university is also in the middle of a campaign to raise \$1 billion that will go exclu-

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sively to scholarships.

It is still noteworthy, however, that NYU's endowment weighs in with the 27th highest total in the country, according to an [annual survey](#) from the National Association of College and University Business Officers and the nonprofit asset-management firm Commonfund.

At least some students are skeptical that accelerated graduation is a way to make NYU more affordable for the masses. The editorial board at the Washington Square News, NYU's student newspaper, called the proposal about students graduating in less than four years a "gimmicky slap in the face."

The accelerate proposal takes a side effect of NYU's affordability problem and attempts to label it as a solu-

tion, the board wrote. It continued by arguing that the idea ignores the fact that many students struggle to graduate in four years and that students have to pay additional tuition for summer and January term classes.

"These supposed solutions seem to suggest the working group believes that four years at NYU is a luxury for the richest students, even as most students in the U.S. require more than four years to finish," [the editorial said](#) before going on to criticize the Affordability Steering Committee and working group that gen-

erated the idea. "The working group is implying that the full college experience is an exclusive luxury for students who can afford the tuition."

But faculty members who are part of the affordability groups said the idea is not to rush students. It's to provide them with an option.

"It depends on the student," said Allen Mincer, a professor of physics who chairs NYU's Faculty Senators Council for those with tenure or who are on the tenure track. The Senators Council has not had an official discussion about the latest affordability measures, but Mincer is also on the Affordability Steering

“

These supposed solutions seem to suggest the working group believes that four years at NYU is a luxury for the richest students, even as most students in the U.S. require more than four years to finish.

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Committee.

Mincer would not recommend that students who are not prepared for heavy course loads attempt to graduate in less than four years, he said.

"Are you rushing students?" he said. "I think you have to balance that against those students for whom this would be somehow enabling them to have a decent education here."

Mincer is trying to reflect the emphasis on affordability in his own classroom. He teaches a science course on particle physics and as-

trophysics for nonscience majors. Its content doesn't line up perfectly with any available textbooks, so in the past he ordered two books for the course. Now, with the talk about reconsidering textbook requirements, he decided to try some pedagogical innovations he'd been considering, such as prerecording lectures before class so that students can listen to them in lieu of textbooks.

Yet Mincer also cautioned that balance is necessary when it comes to affordability. NYU remains a tuition-dependent institution, with tuition and fees [generating](#) 55 percent of operating revenue.

"We have to be able to run the place," Mincer said. "As a faculty member, I still want to see myself get

paid. There are real costs you can't avoid."

Erica Silverman is an M.P.A. student at NYU who is also on the Affordability Steering Committee. The NYU Accelerate program can be helpful for students who want to enter the work force earlier or those who have trouble affording the cost of living in New York City, she said.

Silverman received her bachelor's degree from NYU in 2014 but had been admitted to an accelerated master's program in her senior year. She started taking graduate courses as an undergraduate in order

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to lessen the load on her graduate studies. Then she took a year off to work and save money before returning to graduate school. Silverman also watched friends graduate early.

Sitting on the Affordability Steering Committee has helped Silverman understand that broad changes at NYU are going to take time. She hopes the current initiatives are the beginning of a larger movement on behalf of the institution.

"You start to see how complex these big institutions are," she said. "I think it could eventually lead to more and more positive movement."

Experts noted that universities don't have as much flexibility in controlling student costs as many expect them to. Large portions of their expenses are tied up in buildings or faculty compensation. Those costs can't easily be cut -- and a university could risk its reputation if it did decide to suddenly slash them.

At the same time, institutions have come under increasing pressure on issues of student affordability. They have generally responded by increasing sticker prices and discounting tuition heavily for students who cannot otherwise afford to attend.

NYU has been criticized over the years for raising its sticker price, for [not meeting](#) the estimated financial need of every student it admits and for overall [stinginess](#) in giving financial aid -- NYU offers enough aid to meet full financial need for only 7 percent of undergraduates, [according to data gathered by the College Board](#). It can argue it faces unique

circumstances, such as the high prices in Manhattan or a per-student endowment that doesn't keep up with the institutions in the Ivy League to which it likes to compare itself.

Beyond those arguments, it's interesting to see NYU take part in an affordability conversation prominently including the idea of graduating in less than four years, said Ed Venit, a senior director at higher education research company EAB.

"What we see schools saying is they have a lot of different restrictions," Venit said. "They can't really control -- or at least it's going to be an uphill battle to reduce -- the cost of college. But what they can do is reduce the cost for an individual student."

Other institutions with low four-year graduation rates have been making efforts to push on-time or early graduation, Venit said. Think of public universities and the ["15 to Finish" campaign](#) emphasizing taking at least 15 credits in order to graduate in four years.

As a high-priced private institution, NYU fits a very different profile, however.

"They're doing it for the same reason," Venit said. "They're using the same strategies as schools very dissimilar to them."

NYU has a much higher four-year graduation rate than many other institutions. Its four-year graduation rate was 81 percent for undergraduate students who sought a bachelor's degree and started in the fall of 2009, according to [federal data](#).

In contrast, the national four-year graduation rate [has been](#) roughly 40 percent in recent years.

It only makes sense to emphasize three- or three-and-a-half-year degrees at institutions that already have high four-year graduation rates, said Sandy Baum, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute.

There are other reasons it would make sense for the university to look at accelerated degree options, such as the fact that many of its students graduate with high levels of debt -- [including its low-income students](#).

"I suspect more students at NYU would be open to the three-year option than would be at, say, Princeton," Baum said. "Princeton meets [financial] need."

Over all, Baum has mixed feelings about the idea of students graduating in less than four years. It's hard to criticize, because graduating in a timely manner can improve affordability for students, she said. But universities must be careful not to push students to take too many classes. And it's not clear how much more popular NYU's program will make graduating in less than four years.

NYU may be a different type of institution emphasizing graduating in less than four years, but the idea itself is not new, Baum reiterated.

"People have been talking about three-year degrees for such a long time," she said. "Twenty years ago people were having this conversation."

NYU officials argue that the uni-

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versity's average debt upon graduation has been going down over the past five years, falling by about 25 percent to just over \$30,000.

The university has tripled its financial aid budget to more than \$300 million per year over the decade from 2005 to 2015. It has also more than tripled the average grant given to incoming freshmen, from \$8,900 to more than \$30,000.

Further, NYU has a large number of Pell-eligible students, about 5,500. That's more than Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Columbia combined, they say, adding that the average institutional grant to Pell-eligible

students was more than \$39,000 last year.

The average NYU grant to Pell-eligible students has jumped from covering 55 percent of tuition and fees to covering 82 percent in the last five years, according to university officials.

Of course, costs for tuition and fees and room and board have also been rising.

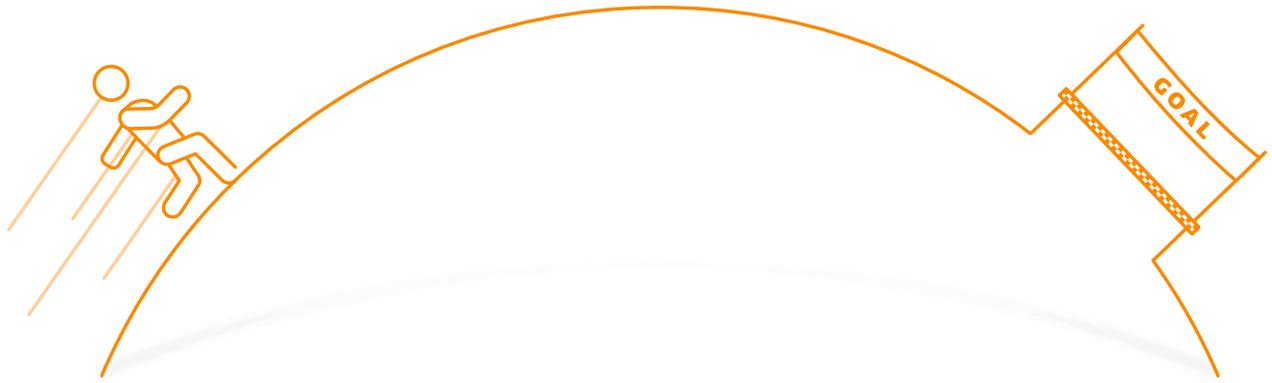
All the chatter about affordability has not hurt NYU's application volume. The number of students applying for first-year admission in the class of 2021 rose 6 percent year over year to more than 67,000 stu-

dents, the university [announced in January](#).

It's a complex picture, said Fred Carl, an associate arts professor who is the chairman of NYU's Contract Faculty Senators Council. Affordability and student debt have been much talked about on campus, and the affordability committee and Affordability Steering Committee and working group have been soliciting ideas widely.

"Saying, 'Cut tuition and nothing else matters,' I don't know that I agree with that," Carl said. "I think that you start where you can and you keep moving." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/09/questions-linger-about-nyu-affordability-plan>



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Scott Walker Loosens the Purse Strings

By RICK SELTZER

Wisconsin governor who pushed deep cuts to higher education now seeks increased spending. Academics welcome the shift, but some worry about details such as a plan to monitor teaching loads.

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's latest two-year budget proposal – released in early 2017-- has been received relatively warmly by higher education leaders, considering it calls for continuing to freeze tuition and then cutting it.

Yes, leaders have expressed reservations about parts of Walker's plan, publicly worrying about performance metrics he wants to put in place, a proposal to allow students to opt out of some fees and a lack of funding for construction and maintenance projects. But they've also welcomed Walker's proposals relating to the state's allotment of funds for university operating budgets.

In short, that's because the governor is executing an about-face in tone on funding for the University of Wisconsin System. After years of deep cuts, Walker is calling for putting more than \$100 million in additional state spending into the system's budget, which spans the 2017-18 and 2018-19 fiscal years. And even though he wants to lower resident undergraduate tuition by 5 percent in 2018-19, he plans to off-



Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker proposed increased funding for the University of Wisconsin System

set institutions' lost revenue with another \$35 million in state money -- on top of the extra \$100 million.

The change in tone doesn't necessarily translate to a lasting change at the bank, however. Some have questioned whether Walker's proposal is a pre-election change of heart geared only toward winning at the polls in 2018. Wisconsin's legislative leaders, who have significant influence over the final budget that will be enacted, have been skeptical of the governor's higher education plans -- sometimes wondering if the money to backfill tuition cuts could

be better spent on student aid. Meanwhile, some faculty and union leaders are arguing that Walker isn't doing enough to pay for previous cuts in state allocations and an ongoing state-imposed tuition freeze that dates back to controversy over the university system's reserves and that has [been in place](#) since the 2013-15 budget.

You don't need elected officials or university leaders to sum up the current situation, though. Brent L. Notbohm, who chairs the University of Wisconsin Superior's Faculty Senate, put it as follows.

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"I think it's certainly more positive than the last biennial budget," said Notbohm, a professor of film and video. "But the devil is going to be in the details."

The details of Walker's \$76.1 billion 2017-19 biennial budget have the state increasing spending on the University of Wisconsin System by \$105.2 million over the two years combined. But it would put in place \$42.5 million in performance funding based on categories like the number of graduates, time to graduation and how many graduates are employed in high-demand fields. Another \$11.6 million [would go](#) to employee compensation, an important pot of money for a state higher education system whose leaders [have been spending millions](#) on nonsal-

ary enticements like research equipment and teaching assistants in order to keep professors from leaving for higher salaries elsewhere.

The \$35 million in state money to pay for the proposed 5 percent tuition cut would be on top of the \$105.2 million in new spending on the University of Wisconsin System. It would save the average student \$360 per year, the governor's office estimates.

The average resident undergraduate pays just under \$7,200 in annual tuition, according to Walker's office. There is considerable range

between institutions, however, with full-time annual [quoted tuition](#) for students at the university system's two-year colleges coming in at \$4,750 compared to nearly \$9,300 for students of most full-time resident undergraduate programs at the flagship Madison campus. Out-of-state and international students pay significantly higher tuition rates, over \$30,000 per year before factoring in fees.

Collectively, the \$105 million and \$35 million would help grow the University of Wisconsin System's budget from about \$6.1 billion in 2017 to more than \$6.2 billion in 2019.



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The budget would grow year to year by 1.6 percent in the first year of the biennium and 0.7 percent in the second.

Walker's budget proposal also contains several other controversial elements. Professors and academic staff members would have their teaching loads tracked. Information on professors' workloads would be made public, and those who teach beyond the standard load would receive rewards. The budget document does not outline exactly how the system would work, instead calling on the Board of Regents to

develop a plan.

The state university system would also be required to offer three-year degree options in order to save students money. Three-year degree pathways would need to be in place for 10 percent of programs by 2018 and for 60 percent of programs by the middle of 2020. At the same time, the budget calls for requiring students to take part in internships or work experience in order to earn bachelor's degrees.

The governor's proposed increases come after past Wisconsin budgets have cut hundreds of millions of dollars from the university system, which has

spent more than \$6 billion annually in recent years. The budget for 2015-17 cut [\\$250 million](#). A faculty and staff union says cuts to the

system since 2011 add up to \$795 million.

When he introduced his budget earlier this month, Walker focused on affordability, supporting the long tuition freeze by saying that tuition went up 118 percent in the decade before the freeze was put in place. He also argued for the 5 percent tuition cut in the budget's second year.

"Reducing tuition by putting more money into the UW is very much like lowering property taxes by putting more money into public schools in the state," he said, according to [a transcript of his budget address](#) de-

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livered Feb. 8.

Walker's budget proposals will have a difficult time making it through the Wisconsin Legislature intact, particularly the headline \$35 million to pay for a tuition cut. Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos [said](#) after Walker's budget was unveiled that he did not believe the governor's tuition cut can make it through the budgeting process. Other Republicans have wondered how the state can come up with the funding needed to pay for the cut.

Leaders within the University of Wisconsin System nonetheless voiced support for the idea of more state funding.

"We are feeling very positive about the governor's proposed budget," system President Ray Cross said in a statement shortly after Walker released his proposal.

"It is a reinvestment in the UW System as we requested, and is certainly a wonderful first step for higher education. It demonstrates the appreciation for the value and economic impact the UW System brings to Wisconsin."

The UW System is reviewing the proposals, according to a spokeswoman. But it would like to see decisions related to tuition costs and performance-based funding made by the Board of Regents, she said.

The chancellor of the system's flagship Madison campus, Rebecca Blank, called the additional money in the proposal a partial restoration of funding cut in the past and some new money.

"This is a welcome change from

the cuts in state support in 10 out of the last 12 years (under both political parties), which created serious challenges for the entire UW System," [she wrote](#) in a Feb. 22 blog post.

But Blank also noted that the UW system already tracks accountability measures under state law [in areas](#) of administrative management, educational performance, financial management and research and economic development. And she took aim at a limited capital budget Walker proposed that did not include funding for renovation and construction projects UW Madison requested. She did note, however that the state was providing funding for maintenance projects, something that had been missing in the last round of budgeting.

Others cautioned that the budget proposal could change significantly before it becomes law. It is critical that the state supplies funding to offset any tuition cut, said Cathy Sandeen, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Colleges and University of Wisconsin Extension. The University of Wisconsin Colleges are freshman and sophomore campuses where students can earn associate's degrees and prepare to transfer into four-year programs.

While the latest budget proposal is a positive development, previous state budgets, including that for the last biennium, have taken their toll on public education, Sandeen said.

"We cut over 20 percent of administrative positions in order to meet that budget cut," Sandeen said.

"Let's be careful to be sure that we are recouping the state money that we need to compensate for that proposed tuition decrease."

It's not clear what the university system would do if it ended up losing more from the 5 percent tuition cut than it gained in state reimbursement. Universities have ways to manage enrollment to make up for some funding differences. One is relying on better-paying out-of-state students. The University of Wisconsin System has already been doing that in recent years. Systemwide in-state resident undergraduate [head count](#) fell from 126,432 in 2012-13 to 117,613 in 2016-17. Systemwide nonresident undergraduate head count rose over the same period from 16,590 to 20,839.

Still, it is significant that the governor is changing his messaging regarding higher education funding, said George Pernsteiner, president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers association. Wisconsin's recent history isn't the only reason. Many other states are discussing cutting their funding for public higher education, Pernsteiner said.

Several of Walker's proposals have been attempted in other states. Many others have adopted performance funding to varying degrees. Three-year degree programs have [been the subject of buzz](#) in the past as well.

The 5 percent tuition cut is effectively a buy down, another strategy that has been tried elsewhere. North Carolina is pursuing an aggressive

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version of a tuition buy down [for some](#) of its public campuses, for example. Even so, policy makers will have plenty to debate regarding tuition levels.

“The question that really always is asked is, when you do that, how is this addressing your affordability issues for your lowest-income students?” Pernsteiner said. “Would the money be more effectively spent in need-based aid programs?”

Faculty members also have significant concerns about the other elements of Walker’s budget. Some see the budget proposals involving faculty workload as an insult to professors who are already working extremely hard.

Ken Menningen is a professor in the department of physics and astronomy at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point who chairs that university’s Common Council. Stevens Point professors teach four classes in both the fall and the spring, Menningen said. That 4-4 teaching load is generally considered high at colleges and universities.

“He wants us to fill out forms and say how many hours I teach this week,” Menningen said. “We did this in the past, and other states have done this, too. It’s always been an exercise in futility.”

Chad Alan Goldberg, a professor of sociology at Madison and the president of United Faculty and Ac-

ademic Staff AFT Local 223, questioned funding levels and the proposed performance-based funding. Cuts to the UW system since 2011 have totaled \$795 million, he said. That has meant fewer classes for students, fewer programs and larger class sizes.

Goldberg said the union supports the idea of a tuition cut but that it would be better to find a way to eliminate tuition. It is also a bad idea for Walker to set up a series of performance metrics that require institutions within the higher education system to compete for funding, “Hunger Games-style,” he said.

“There’s a concern that the metrics he’s proposed would create pretty strong incentives for the various campuses to accept fewer students who are underprepared for college,” Goldberg said. “That has implications for accessibility and higher education being an engine for social mobility.”

Student groups voiced concern about Walker’s proposal to make optional student fees known as segregated fees. Those fees fund essential services like transportation, rape crisis centers and veterans’ services, said Sally Rohrer, who chairs the legislative affairs committee of the Associated Students of Madison.

“We fear an opt-out system would create a freeloader problem, where we can’t deny students services but

we cannot pay for student services,” she said. “Then nobody has those services.”

Yet to be seen is what kind of lasting influence Walker’s proposal will have on public higher education in the state.

Many wonder whether the governor is making a show of investing in universities as he prepares for the 2018 election but will change his tune in the future. Some don’t believe he has changed his tone enough right now.

“It would be great if the person I worked for, the governor, would actually have a high esteem for faculty like me,” said Menningen, the Common Council Chair at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. “But I’m not so sure that throwing money at the UW system and saying, ‘We’re going to keep them accountable’ quite does away with that suspicion.”

Others remember previous battles that make them suspicious of state lawmakers.

Notbohm, the Faculty Senate President at the University of Wisconsin Superior, said a [weakening of tenure protections](#) in recent years still hangs heavy in the minds of professors.

“I think there is a trust issue on both sides,” Notbohm said. “The Legislature seems to lack trust for the educators, and the educators lack some trust for the Legislature.” ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/01/wisconsin-higher-ed-leaders-welcome-proposed-funding-worry-about-details>

Large-Scale Assessment Without Standardized Tests

BY COLLEEN FLAHERTY

First data, based on analysis of work at 92 colleges, finds much success in writing, some in critical thinking and more limited gains in quantitative skills.

Meaningful assessment of student learning, beyond tests and grades, befuddles even seasoned educators. Are students really absorbing what they're being taught, and will they remember it later on? How can that be measured and compared nationally? Those questions, among others, drive the work of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, which in February 2017 released a report on what it calls a "groundbreaking approach" to assessing student learning.

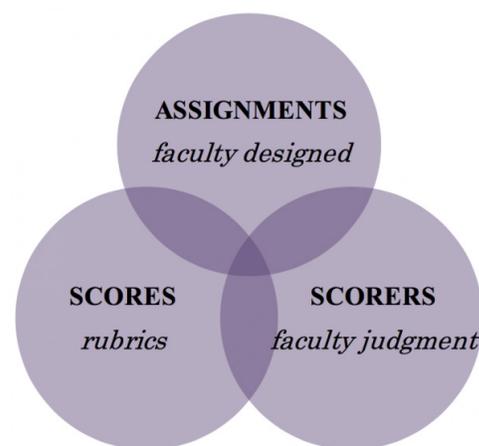
"This project represents the first attempt to develop a large-scale model for assessing student achievement across institutions that goes beyond testing," Lynn Pasquerella, president of AAC&U, said in a statement. She the called preliminary data on which the report is based "encouraging," and promising in terms of improving educational quality and equity.

The report, "[On Solid Ground](#)," includes results from the first two

years of AAC&U's national Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) initiative. It's something of a portrait of student performance in critical thinking, written communication and quantitative literacy. Educators and employers agree all are essential for student success in the workplace and in life, according to AAC&U.

Professors from 92 public and private associate and bachelor's degree-granting institutions across a range of competitiveness uploaded approximately 21,000 samples of student work to a web-based platform. Some 288 trained educators from across disciplines then scored the work on a scale of zero to four, using AAC&U's previously released VALUE rubrics in the key areas. About one-third of the samples were scored twice, to ensure consistency.

The VALUE approach tries to get at student learning in ways that standardized tests or other assessment practices don't by "embracing" complexity instead of trying to



AAC&U's VALUE approach to student learning.

eliminate or rejecting it. So rather than something "divorced from the curriculum," the report says, student assessments included in the initiative were all designed by professors in an actual college course.

All work came from those students who had completed 75 percent of more of the required coursework for an associate or bachelor's degree. The students' samples were supposed to show some of their best, most motivated work, to see

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how much they'd learned thus far in their studies.

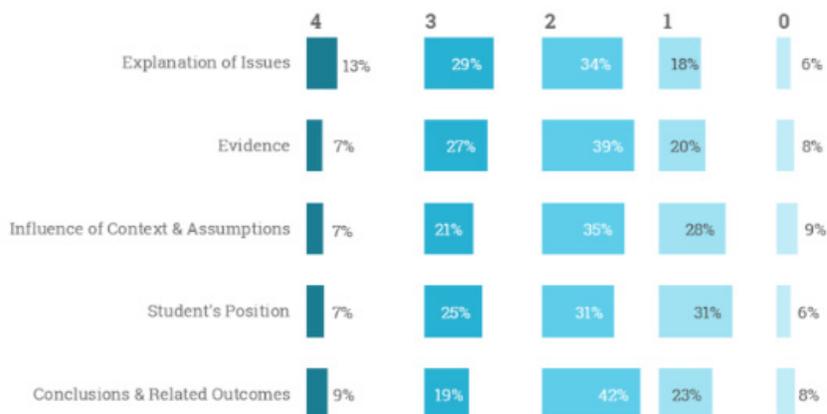
Lots of Critical Thinking, but Room for More

Key findings include that the strongest student performance was in written communication. It's good news for the many institutions that have in recent decades focused on improving student writing. Yet the study also revealed that students still struggle to use evidence to support their written arguments.

Regarding critical thinking, students tended to explain issues well and present related evidence. However, the study says, students have more trouble "drawing conclusions or placing the issue in a meaningful context (i.e., making sense out of or explaining the importance of the issue studied)."

The curricular focus on developing critical thinking skills in students through their major programs, which faculty claim is a priority, according to the study, "is reflected in the higher levels of performance among students in upper division

VALUE Initiative-Wide Results 2014-2016: Critical Thinking 4-Year Institutions, Public & Private, 75% Completion (90+ Credit Hours)



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Students showed strength in calculating and interpreting data. Their quantitative skills were generally weaker, however, when it came to making assumptions and applying their knowledge. Such results suggest that students are getting the mechanics of math and related skills, but not so much the "why," or when and where to use certain calculations, according to AAC&U.

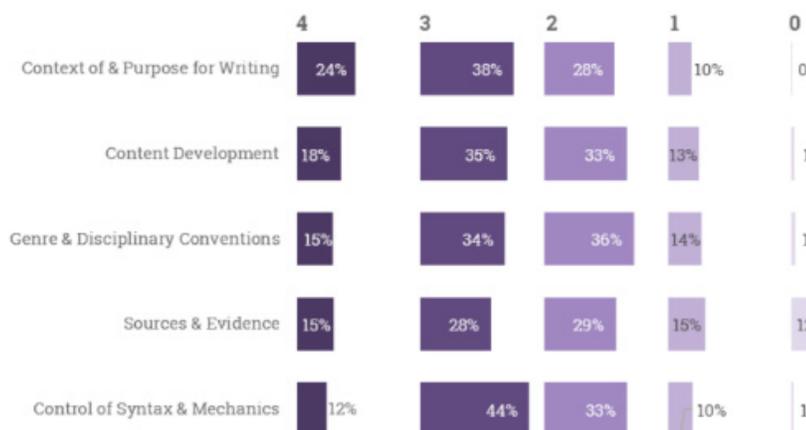
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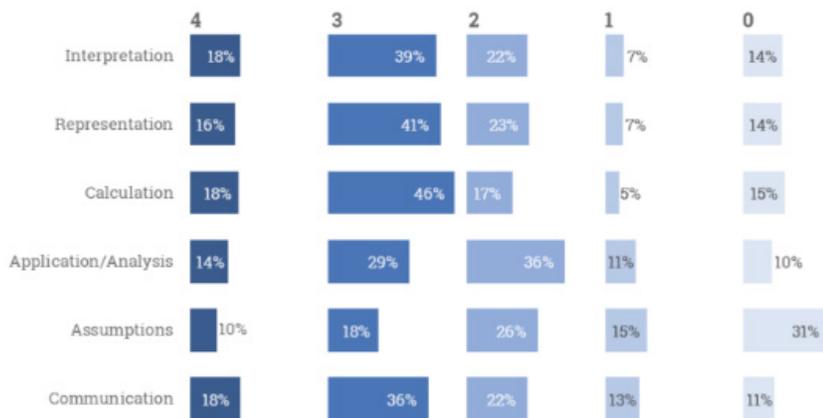
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"In a world awash in data, VALUE generates evidence — evidence that points to what is working well and, critically, where there is room for improvement," AAC&U asserts. "It empowers faculty as both disciplinary and pedagogical experts, yet at the same time challenges faculty to interrogate their own teaching practices and assumptions about how their students in particular come to

VALUE Initiative-Wide Results 2014-2016: Written Communication 4-Year Institutions, Public & Private, 75% Completion (90+ Credit Hours)



VALUE Initiative-Wide Results 2014-2016: Quantitative Literacy 4-Year Institutions, Public & Private, 75% Completion (90+ Credit Hours)



master important knowledge, skills, and abilities within the context of their classes. If faculty are truly the owners and arbiters of the curriculum at each institution, they — in partnership with their students — must also own the learning.”

Achievement Levels

Students at four-year institutions who had completed 90 credit hours showed higher average achievement levels than students at two-year institutions who had completed 45 credit hours, the report says, “suggesting that the continued focus on core essential learning outcomes (e.g., Writing Across the Curriculum, upper-division writing-intensive courses or upper-division courses that require thinking critically within the major) supports enhanced levels of higher-order achievement across the three learning outcomes.”

Assignments themselves were important, too, as early results point “in several ways to the importance of the assignments in students’

abilities to demonstrate higher, second-order quality work,” reads the report. “What institutions ask their students to do makes a difference for the quality of the learning.”

Scorers of student worked weighed in on the validity of the rubrics, and reported that they covered the “core dimensions of learning” in each of the learning outcomes. They also said the rubrics could be used for judging quality of learning in different courses in different fields by faculty from different departments — a testament to the transferability of the initiative to institutions beyond the pilot group.

Regarding reliability, there was generally agreement among raters on student scores. Weighted percent agreement ranged from 84 percent on some dimensions of quantitative literacy to 94 percent on some dimensions of written communication.

“A key feature of our assessment strategy is the scoring of authentic student work using a common ru-

bric, which the AAC&U VALUE rubrics provide,” said David Switzer, faculty fellow for assessment and associate professor of economics at St. Cloud State University. “Our participation in the [collaborative] has given us both the knowledge and the capacity to assess student work from all across the university, and shed light on how to assess student learning in co-curricular programs.”

The report notes that policymakers want to know more about student learning, too. That’s potentially concerning to professors who worry about assessment data being used to make decisions about funding or other matters that may not actually benefit the institution. Yet some professors involved in the study said it helped take some pressure off instructors.

“On our campus, in particular, we have used the VALUE rubrics as models to launch discussions as we ask faculty to work toward articulating a shared understanding of what it means to be teaching courses that fulfill our distribution requirements,” Alexis D. Hart, associate professor of English and director of writing at Allegheny College, said in the report. “These discussions have really changed the tenor of assessment from one of policing faculty teaching practices to enriching conversations about teaching and learning and how assessment can inform those conversations.”

Looking ahead, AAC&U is focused on disaggregating data based on student characteristics, such as

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whether they're from low-income families.

"The ongoing VALUE initiative puts learning outcomes quality and improvement in the hands of state and institutional leaders, faculty, and students — exactly where it needs to be if educators and policy makers are serious about preparing graduates for success beyond the first job and in their personal, civic and social lives, regardless of what type of institution they attend," the report says.

AAC&U worked together on the VALUE initiative with the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Quality Student Learning, the Minnesota Collaborative and the Great Lakes Colleges Association Collaborative, along with participating institutions.

'A Win for All Parties'

Carol Rutz, director of the College Writing Program at Carleton College, appreciates the complexities of assessing student learning, in part by having co-written the 2016 book, [Faculty Development and Student Learning: Assessing the Connections](#). Carleton wasn't involved in the VALUE study, but Rutz was on the national team that developed the initial VALUE rubric for written communication. She said she was initially "dubious" that AAC&U's rubrics were being tested as bench-

marks, since she'd argued that local context matters "more than ratings derived from a national, generic instrument" — what many object to about standardized tests.

Now, though, Rutz said, "I can better appreciate what the study offers." She called the VALUE initiative's strength its design, in that rubrics were taught to faculty members from participating institutions, the material that was rated was

work itself." Indeed, that's a point her recent book makes, and part of Carleton's portfolio assessment that has provided, in Rutz's words, successful, iterative faculty development on assignment design.

"If the planets had aligned favorably, I would have jumped at the chance to see how Carleton students' work stacks up. For now, I look forward to hearing more about the VALUE study, including faculty

development implications."

Terrel Rhodes, vice president of quality, curriculum and assessment and executive director of VALUE at AAC&U,

said grades were long thought to be good measures of learning, and they still are — except that they rely heavily on content mastery. Increasingly, he said, accreditors, employers and others want to see that students have learned "transferable" skills, not just content.

"If we have seen anything in recent years [in] change and news, challenging issues increase in occurrence," Rhodes said. "We see how incredibly important it is for students to not only know things, but know what to do with what they know."

They also need to know where to look when they don't know something, he added.

As for VALUE, he said, "AAC&U was in right place at right time, with

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coded and distributed among readers, and the ratings were analyzed "with clear awareness of the limitations." AAC&U cautions, for example, that the preliminary data "are not generalizable beyond the three individual VALUE Collaboratives," and that extrapolating meaning and "making inferences about the quality of learning at the state or national level are entirely inappropriate at this time."

Professors "reading genuine student work shows that student products can be assessed outside of the classroom situation in a responsible way, thanks in large measure to qualified readers," Rutz added. Better yet, "the data point toward the necessity for considering the assignment as well as the student

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a strong frame and tools that faculty and administrators and employers accepted.”

Natasha Jankowski, director of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and a research assistant professor of education policy, organization and leadership at the University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign, called VALUE “a wonderful shift away from assessment as a compliance or reporting exercise to one that is embedded in the lived experiences of faculty.”

By making clear connections to assignments in the classroom, she said, policy makers are able to get a “better picture of student learning,

while faculty receive meaningful information that can be used to revise teaching and learning strategies in ways that benefit students.

This is a win for all parties involved and one that positions policy makers to better communicate with institutions on measures of importance to both parties.” ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/23/aacu-releases-report-national-large-scale-look-student-learning>

Liberal Arts Students Are Getting Less Artsy

BY COLLEEN FLAHERTY

At colleges proud of attracting students who want a broad-based, non-vocational education, numbers of majors in arts and humanities are falling.

Liberal arts colleges promise students a well-rounded education in core disciplines that will prepare them for a variety of careers and lifelong learning — not just a first job. Increasingly, though, even attending a liberal arts institution doesn't inoculate students from anxieties about the job market that may push them toward the math and the sciences, at the expense of arts and humanities.

"What liberal arts colleges historically have said to students is, 'Do what you love, and the rest will take care of itself,'" said Sarah Bolton, president of the College of Wooster. Increasingly, though, that message isn't resonating with students, who instead think they'll be best served later on by taking as many quantitative courses as possible — including as electives, she said. So it's statistics instead of theater, for example, or another science course over one in literature.

As a physicist, Bolton doesn't object to more science — until it compromises a student's overall experience. "I firmly believe that the



sciences are part of the liberal arts, but I also believe that the arts are part of the liberal arts, as well," she said.

Bolton said the challenge for colleges like hers going forward will be to encourage students to make the most of the curriculum based on what they want to do when they graduate, while not limiting themselves or sacrificing what they really want to study. Wooster is currently reviewing its curricular requirements to encourage students to do just that. It's also gathering long-term data on enrollment and major choices. There's already anecdotal evidence to suggest that some students are skimping on the arts and

humanities courses they came to liberal arts institution to try out.

At Wellesley College, that's definitely the case. The college surveyed recent graduates and asked which of the 12 degree components they wished they'd taken more or less of. About half of respondents said they wouldn't change anything. But about half said they would, with the most "wish I'd taken more" comments relating to the arts, languages and non-Western cultures. The most "wish I'd taken fewer" comments were about courses in math and the physical sciences.

"I wouldn't say it was students' biggest regret, but when they looked at their academic programs,

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they wished they had done more arts and humanities,” said Ann Velenchik, dean of academic affairs at Wellesley and an associate professor of economics.

Between 2008 and 2016, for example, there was a 14 percent decline in enrollments in the humanities and an 8 percent decline in enrollments in the social sciences. At the same time, there was a 29 percent increase in enrollments in math and the sciences, especially computer science and neuroscience. Interdisciplinary courses are also on the rise, with an 18 percent jump in enrollments.

In terms of majors, 27 percent of Wellesley graduates majored in the arts and humanities in 2008. In 2016, it was 23 percent. Social sciences, historically Wellesley’s most popular area, saw a smaller decline, from 44 percent to 42 percent. Majors in math and the sciences jumped, meanwhile, from 18 percent to 23 percent.

“There’s definitely been a movement from the humanities to the sciences,” Velenchik said. Yet she noted that enrollments in particular are more “balanced” than they used to be — meaning that they’re more evenly represented now across the arts and sciences.

Is that good or bad? Velenchik was somewhat neutral, saying that at Wellesley, at least, students tend to “overfulfill” their distribution requirements, regardless of major. Those

requirements include three courses in the humanities, three in the social sciences, three in math and the physical sciences, two years of a foreign language and a first-year writing course.

William Deresiewicz, author of *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* and current National Endowment for the Humanities-Hannah Arendt Center Visiting Distinguished Fellow at Bard College, was less neutral about national trends away from the humanities.

“It’s a terrible thing, and it bespeaks the destructive attitude that is ubiq-



It’s a terrible thing, and it bespeaks the destructive attitude that is ubiquitous in education today, which is that the sole purpose of education is to set you up for job and career and that you should therefore study something practical, understood in the narrowest terms.



uitous in education today, which is that the sole purpose of education is to set you up for job and career and that you should therefore study something practical, understood in the narrowest terms,” he said.

Deresiewicz said he’s studied major — not enrollment — data at top-20 colleges and universities, as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, and noticed an “enormous shift” toward economics, even more so at liberal arts colleges than at research institutions. In 1995, for example, English was the most popular major at 9 of the top 20 liberal arts colleges, compared to just one in 2013.

Economics and the other social sciences — namely political science — surged from the most popular majors at four colleges to 13 over the same period.

Because liberal arts institutions usually don’t offer the kinds of “explicitly vocational majors that most schools do (communications, education, business — the last of which accounts for between a fifth and a quarter of all majors across the country), students at fancy schools tend to choose one of the next best things: biology, engineering, computer science, and for those not inclined to the sciences, econom-

ics,” Deresiewicz added via email.

What Can Be Done?

Part of Bolton’s thinking is informed by having served as dean until

recently at Williams College. That campus has seen a decline the number of majors in a few humanities and arts fields — namely studio art and art history. But that’s been coupled with a sharp increase in the number of students who choose to double major (currently 42 percent of students), with at least one major in the sciences, technology, math or engineering (STEM), according to information from Williams. So even as the sciences have surged, the net impact on the humanities has been minimal.

Beyond encouraging students to double-major, George Shuffleton,

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associate dean and professor of English at Carleton College, advised talking to students about what they want to learn. “We work really hard to dispel the notion” that students have to fine-tune their studies to particular career aspiration, he said. “Students come to a place like Carleton because they really are committed to getting a liberal arts education, and sometimes it’s a question of reminding them that if they’d wanted to pursue a narrowly professional education, there are other places they could have gone to instead. The mission is reminding them why they made that choice in the first place.”

Carleton has seen slight declines in some non-physical science fields within the last decade. English accounted for 9 percent of majors in 2006, for example, compared to 6 percent in 2016; social sciences and history shrank from 31 percent to 26 percent of majors over the same period. But surges in STEM fields were centralized, seen in just math and computer science (the latter was 2 percent of majors in 2006, and now it’s about 10 percent).

To that point, Shuffleton said there was probably a something a bit more nuanced going on than [a much-lamented decline of the humanities](#): gender. At Carleton and nationwide, more women are enrolling in disciplines in which they’ve historically been underrepresented, he said. “In fields like math and computer science, we see that as a success.”

Velenchik, at Wellesley, said trends

toward the sciences probably also reflect her institution’s efforts to enroll more first-generation students — many of whom have a different, perhaps more practical idea of what college is and should accomplish than do students whose parents and grandparents attended liberal arts institutions.

Silvia L. López, David and Marian Adams Bryn-Jones Distinguished Teaching Professor of the Humanities and director of the Humanities Center at Carleton, said via email that numbers alone don’t do the conversation justice. “Our curriculum design requires students to learn a second language and ensures that the students take classes distributed in all areas of knowledge and artistic practice offered,” she said, while about 75 percent of students go abroad. “Carleton’s liberal arts education is exactly that: an education. It can’t be measured by the number of majors in the hard sciences, but must be understood through the transformative experiences that students have in and out of the classroom that teach them that a rich and full life can only be one if lived in an examined and generous way.”

It’s true that many liberal arts colleges have distribution requirements that ensure students are learning within a variety of disciplines, regardless of their majors. Some colleges have also layered thematic requirements on disciplinary requirements. Barnard College, for example, debuted new curriculum called “Foundations,” which

promoted six “modes of thinking” — technologically and digitally; quantitatively and empirically; social difference; global inquiry; locally (New York); and historical perspective — in addition to requirements in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. (Computer science enrollments and majors are up significantly at Barnard.)

Extracurricular opportunities — typically plentiful on liberal arts campuses — only enrich those studies. Some campuses also have added courses, majors and programs that ensure students are studying the liberal arts even when they’re not taking courses within the traditional liberal arts disciplines.

Carol Quillen, president of Davidson College, said her campus has moved increasingly toward problem-centered learning in recent years, such as by adding programs like digital studies. The minor emphasizes digital creativity, culture and methodology through coursework in design, ethics, quantitative literacy and other elements of the liberal arts. Health and human values is another popular program.

“These are the kinds of questions that are inspiring faculty and students, and our curriculum is becoming and less departmentally focused,” she said. “We’re thinking about a liberal arts curriculum that looks much more transdisciplinary and pulls courses and faculty members from across the disciplines together.”

Liberal arts colleges, with their typically small faculties, are unique-

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ly suited for collaboration and being nimble to students' needs and interests, Quillen said. She noted that a group of faculty members had responded to waning interest in a four-semester Western traditions humanities sequence by cutting the time commitment and adding a global focus, for example.

Surely such updates will draw criticism from those who advocate for a traditional liberal arts core, and who [blame any decline of the humanities on new, more critical approaches](#). But Quillen said she had no patience for arguments that change inevitably waters down the liberal arts, and suggested that the key to maintaining educational quality is rigor, not stasis.

The notion that adding Zora Neale Hurston, for example, to a course in Western literature — which traditionally would have been dominated

by white male authors — somehow means sacrificing rigor “is ridiculous,” she added. “Plus we live in a world where fields of inquiry are constantly expanding.”

Carleton isn't the only college adding new programs. Williams, for instance, has added a concentration in public health and new majors in Arabic, environmental studies and statistics in the past decade.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities, which promotes liberal education, advocates inquiry-based, integrative learning and high-impact teaching practices over core curricula and stringent distribution requirements, “where students' proficiencies are practiced and demonstrated across all learning experiences,” said Lynn Pasquerella, president.

General education now also requires “signature work,” in which

students “integrate and apply their learning to questions that matter, she said. “Signature work prepares students to grapple with complex, unscripted problems for which the answers are yet unknown and to use strategies of inquiry, analysis and collaboration to construct a course of action and take responsibility for the results.”

Over all, the association's vision for general education “is grounded in guided preparation for students to identify and build capacity for addressing significant questions and challenges that matter to the student and to the broader society,” Pasquerella said. Disciplinary work “remains foundational, but students are provided with practice connecting their discipline with others, with the co-curriculum, and with the needs of society — in preparation for work, citizenship and life.” ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/21/liberal-arts-students-fears-about-job-market-upon-graduation-are-increasingly>

The Free Certificate Movement

BY ASHLEY A. SMITH

Indiana moves to focus on job training through nondegree programs.

YOU CAN. GO BACK.

Statewide effort to help **750,000+ Hoosiers** finish their degrees.

When people talk about free community college, they're most likely thinking about tuition-free programs like those in Tennessee or the one proposed by President Obama, which focus on getting students to an associate degree with as little debt as possible.

But in Indiana, a new proposal -- the Workforce Ready Grant -- would instead offer free community college to those students who want a certificate in a high-demand field. While the certificates would vary by program, they typically take anywhere from 18 to 34 credit hours to complete or at most one year for a full-time student.

"We're aware of what's happening in Tennessee and other states, but

we wanted to send a message to Hoosiers that if you come back and get a certificate in a high value area ... then we will pay for it," said Teresa Lubbers, Indiana's commissioner for higher education.

Indiana projects that by 2025 the state will have about one million job openings due to retirements and new positions. But there are approximately 1.4 million working-age Hoosiers with a high school education or less. About 750,000 of the state's residents have some college, but no associate degree or higher, and, of that population, about 170,000 have some kind of certificate.

The [focus](#) on college as a means not only for a degree but work force development is one the Trump ad-

ministration and some academics seem to agree on.

The state has determined that a high-value certificate is one that has "high job placement, high completion rate, high wage and high demand." Some of those potential certificates would be in the following fields: automation and robotics technology, medical office administration, supply chain management logistics, certified nursing assistant, welding, or commercial driver's license.

Indiana only has two public institutions that provide two-year degrees and certificates -- Ivy Tech Community College and Vincennes University.

The Workforce Ready Grant would

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be a last-dollar program, where students would first use federal and state aid to cover the cost of college before using the grant aid, but the state plans to award the grant to all adults regardless of financial need. The Legislature and governor's office are considering paying \$2 million a year for the grant program. The state would only cover up to two years, and the cost of certificates is determined by the college's tuition per credit hour. For instance, Indiana residents at Ivy Tech paid \$135.15 per credit hour last year.

Lubbers said there is a separate adult student grant paid for with existing money, and with the last-dollar component, the state is convinced it will be able to cover the costs.

And because the initiative could be appealing to working adults, there's an opportunity for employers to provide tuition assistance.

"We used to hear employers say that if they trained and educated [employees] they would leave, but we don't hear that anymore," Lubbers said. "Now we hear that if we don't train or scale them up, we can't produce a product or services."

Indiana has been trying to encourage more adults to go back to school. Last year the state launched the You Can Go Back initiative, which provides \$1,000 in assistance to adult students. So far, more than 9,000 people have re-enrolled in college through that program.

The state has already seen an increase in the number of Indiana residents earning certificates. Since

2012, the state has increased certificates awarded by 32 percent, from 12,910 to 17,046. And 55 percent of the state's certificate earners have gone on to complete an associate degree, while 25 percent have earned multiple certificates in the same year.

That growth in certificates is reflective of a nationwide trend to move toward quick credentials as they become more popular.

"Certificates are the fastest-growing award in postsecondary education, and that's because the skill requirements at entry-level positions for what used to be high school jobs have increased, in part because they've shifted from manufacturing into service functions," said Anthony Carnevale, a research professor and director of Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce.

"What Indiana is doing makes a good deal of sense, and it's powerful. It breaks away from the American fascination with the high-school-to-Harvard pathway as the only pathway available to students."

Lubbers said it's common to hear adult students, in particular, complain that the barrier to pursuing a degree is the general education requirements that often come attached to programs that lead to a career.

But there are some areas of concern that students should be aware of before they pursue a certificate.

For instance, certificates tend to hold more value for men than they

do for women, because the more valuable certificates tend to be in male-dominated industries, Carnevale said.

And if students want to pursue degrees or stack the certificates so they're adding additional skills to their repertoire, they will be able to do that with the certificates Indiana awards, Lubbers said.

"Even the credits from a stackable certificate will often not be transfer worthy after a few years," said Mary Alice McCarthy, director of the Center on Education and Skills for New America. "That's one reason why certificates that lead to occupational licenses or industry certifications can be more valuable than just stand-alone certificates, even if they are for credit."

Meanwhile, Ivy Tech officials are looking forward to seeing more students in its system embracing certificates. The system expects that it may have to increase health-care programs in order to meet the demand, as well, said Mary Jane Michalak, vice president of government relations at Ivy Tech.

"A work force certification and work force training and certificates are just as important and can be just as lucrative as bachelor's degrees, and in some cases, students who graduate with a certificate will come out of college immediately making more than those pursuing a bachelor's degree," she said. "We need individuals at all levels, and it's important we connect adults to the jobs that are available." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/24/indiana-creates-free-tuition-program-certificate-earners>

Better Marriage Between College and Job Training

By PAUL FAIN

Republican-dominated Washington wants more occupational job training as an alternative to college degrees. But higher education will remain the primary federal job-training system, albeit one experts say could use a reboot.

In a rare point of agreement, the Trump administration and many academics would like to see less focus on colleges as work force development centers.

The administration has said too many students are being prodded toward bachelor's degrees over apprenticeships and other noncollege options.

"We must embrace new and effective job-training approaches, including online courses, high school curriculums and private-sector investment that prepare people for trade, manufacturing, technology and other really well-paying jobs and careers," President Trump said in February during a meeting on vocational training with U.S. and German business leaders.

"These kinds of options can be a positive alternative to a four-year degree," he said. "So many people go to college, four years, they don't like

it, they're not necessarily good at it, but they're good at other things, like fixing engines and building things."

Likewise, many in higher education, mostly at four-year institutions, resist pressure for colleges to be more attuned to their occupational role, arguing in defense of general education and decrying the transactional view of college as being primarily a means to a job.

College and faculty leaders also tend to dislike performance metrics that are based on graduates' employment and earnings.

Yet higher education has been the federal government's primary work force system for decades. And that is unlikely to change, experts said.



Angela Merkel and Ivanka Trump at meeting on vocational training

Just 6 percent of the roughly \$114 billion the federal government spends annually on work force development and education goes toward noncollege job-training programs, according to data from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. (See graphic, on next page.)

Higher education gets a much larger share of that funding -- rough-

Federal education and training spending by category



Source: [Georgetown U Center on Education and the Workforce](#)

ly 34 percent -- with K-12 receiving a similarly large portion. Source: Georgetown U Center on Education and the Workforce.

"We're spending more on job training than ever before. It's just that the funding has moved to education," said Mary Alice McCarthy, director of the Center on Education and Skills with the education policy program at New America and a former official at the U.S. Education and Labor Departments.

This was not always the case. Anthony Carnevale, the [Georgetown center's](#) director, said job training and employment programs outside higher education and K-12 accounted for 40 percent of the federal workforce budget in 1978.

One reason for the shift is that at least 60 percent of jobs now require at least some college education, according to the center, up from 28 percent in 1973. The trend will continue, Carnevale said.

In addition, federal spending on higher education is an easier political sell than paying for occupational or vocational programs that train workers outside college.

"It's not the thing middle-class people want for their kids," said Carnevale.

So higher education became the preferred system for job training, he said, a trend that began in the 1980s and accelerated during the Clinton administration, which shuttered federal job-training programs in ex-

change for higher education subsidies aimed at the middle class. (Employers spend \$177 million a year in formal job training, the [center has said](#), an amount that is increasing, but less quickly than overall spending on higher education.)

"Higher education became the chicken in every pot," said Carnevale. "It moves votes."

'Time for a Reboot'

Yet nobody seems particularly happy about the federal government's current approach to job training.

Bipartisan angst about the skills gap has become more urgent, as employers say they struggle to hire work-ready employees. Meanwhile, a wide range of experts said noncol-

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lege federal work force programs are inefficient, duplicative and lacking in incentives.

The current \$18 billion annual federal work force budget is divvied up among roughly 50 programs.

“It’s spread across a wide range of programs for niche audiences,” said Jason Tyszko, executive director of the Center for Education and Workforce at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, who describes federal work force programs as being “stretched thin.”

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act ([WIOA](#)), which was enacted in 2015 and replaced an outdated predecessor law, is the largest of the federal job-training programs. Its \$3.4 billion annual budget is intended to extend across education, training and job-support services, with a goal of helping job seekers and employers as well as setting priorities for local, state and regional work force investment priorities -- a big ask.

The program’s task won’t get easier, at least if the Trump administration’s budget plan takes hold in the U.S. Congress.

The White House has called for a \$2.5 billion, or 21 percent, cut to the Labor Department’s \$9.6 billion in annual funding. While Trump’s budget document was relatively light on details, the National Skills Coalition [projected](#) that it would result in as much as a 50 percent cut to WIOA’s budget.

The White House plan also would decrease “federal support for job training and employment service

formula grants, shifting more responsibility for funding these services to states, localities and employers.”

A broad coalition of work force and labor groups [criticized the proposed cuts](#), calling them unnecessary and inconsistent with the Trump administration’s job-creation goals.

But Tyszko, citing [two](#) 2011 Government Accountability Office [reports](#) that described wasteful overlap and fragmentation of federal work force programs, said funding levels aren’t the main problem.

“Throwing more money at these programs and how they run could actually have diminishing returns,” he said.

Likewise, a broad range of experts agreed with Tyszko that the time is ripe for the federal government to reconsider its approach to occupational training.

“There really needs to be a fundamental reconciliation between higher education and work force development,” said Maria Flynn, president and CEO of Jobs for the Future and a former official with the Labor Department’s Employment and Training Administration.

Better coordination between the Labor and Education Departments is needed, she said, with particular attention to the interplay between WIOA and the Pell Grant program, which is the primary federal grant for low-income students. (The Trump budget would cut \$3.9 billion from the Pell program’s reserves.)

There are some signs that the two systems are being steered together,

Flynn said.

For example, she cited a bipartisan [legislative proposal](#) in the U.S. Senate that would allow students to use Pell Grants for short-term job-training credentials, such as college-issued certificates. Currently Pell can be applied only to programs that take more than 15 weeks or 600 clock hours to complete.

Other promising ideas Flynn mentioned include an Education Department experiment that is granting temporary access to federal financial aid for noncollege training entities, including skills boot camps and online course providers, under partnerships with accredited colleges on job training in high-demand fields.

Likewise, Flynn said the college and career [pathways approach](#) championed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the American Association of Community Colleges can help students follow a more structured route to completion and a job.

Structured pathways share some resemblance to the German model of nudging students toward an occupation earlier in their academic career, she said, without the controversial student “tracking” that’s a tough sell in this country.

“In the U.S. there’s some middle ground we can get to,” she said, “by really emphasizing the idea of pathways.”

Likewise, McCarthy and others said the federal government could do more to prevent students from having to spend more time and

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money than is necessary on vocational training.

Perverse incentives, she said, encourage colleges to make academic programs credit bearing and longer than might be ideal. For example, some medical assistant and early childhood programs were noncredit in the past. But to make those offerings financially viable, McCarthy said, many community colleges and for-profits began offering credit-bearing options in those fields.

One overarching fix to the lack of coordination on job training, according to McCarthy, would be for some Labor Department programs to be folded into Congress's looming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which is the law that oversees federal aid. She said that shared focus could benefit college-based occupational training, too.

"We have to bring what we know about good training quality to the higher education side," said McCarthy. "It's definitely time for a reboot."

Market for Apprentices

Apprenticeships in particular appear to be in vogue as the GOP dominates both federal and state policy making.

The president and Ivanka Trump, his daughter, met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and a group of corporate executives from the U.S. and Germany to discuss vocational training. Ivanka Trump said

the executives would form a task force that would produce a report on training programs that should be expanded.

President Trump [reportedly has embraced](#) a call by one of those executives to create five million apprenticeships within five years. That would be a steep increase from the current number of apprentices -- roughly 450,000 -- [who are enrolled](#) in Labor Department-registered programs, according to McCarthy.

The White House has pushed for private funding for apprenticeships and job training, with Ivanka Trump reportedly saying that "ingenuity, creativity often comes from the determination of the private sector." And last year [Congress added](#) \$90 million in funding for apprentice programs.

The Trump budget says it will help states expand apprenticeships, although it doesn't specify new money for them. But the \$1 trillion in infrastructure spending the White House has said it is mulling probably would include funding for apprenticeships and other job training. (Carnevale's center [projects](#) that 55 percent of jobs created under such a program would not require any college, with 60 percent of new infrastructure jobs requiring no more than six months of on-the-job training.)

Some observers said the current structure of the Labor Department's apprenticeship program can be

balky. To participate, companies often must file voluminous applications and wait months for the feds to respond.

"It's a bureaucratic process where those who are good at filling out papers get the funds," said Ryan Craig, co-founder of University Ventures, an investment firm. "Government is ill positioned to pick winners."

As a result, Craig is focused on job-training "intermediaries" between colleges and employers, where the money comes from job seekers or from employers themselves. Examples include Revature, an employer-funded training firm, and boot camps like Galvanize and General Assembly.

Yet there's a role for government in promoting apprenticeships, Craig said.

He cites the United Kingdom's [apprenticeship levy](#). The U.K. is requiring all employers with an annual payroll of more than 3 million pounds (\$3.74 million) to pay a tax of 0.5 percent of their payroll amount on apprenticeships, with the government kicking in an extra 10 percent "top-up" to those apprenticeship funds.

Craig called the levy an exciting idea, which, if combined with the right incentives and outcomes requirements, would be worth a look in this country.

"We need to figure out how to spawn a market here," he said. ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/22/ideas-improving-higher-educations-primary-role-work-force-development>

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