Postsecondary Value: Improving Equitable Outcomes through Data and Action

Brian Bridges (NJ Office of Higher Education)  
David Troutman (TX Higher Education Coordinating Board)  
Diane Cheng (IHEP)

SHEEO Policy Conference  
August 9, 2023
# Postsecondary Value Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINE</th>
<th>MEASURE</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A shared definition of college value that can inform both programmatic and policy efforts in the field.</td>
<td>A measurement framework for how individual colleges and universities create equitable value for students.</td>
<td>A policy, advocacy, and communications action agenda to encourage widespread application of the value definition and measurement framework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. DEFINE
2. MEASURE
3. ACT

[https://postsecondaryvalue.org/](https://postsecondaryvalue.org/)
Postsecondary Value Definition

Students experience **postsecondary value** when provided equitable access and support to complete quality, affordable credentials that offer economic mobility and prepare them to advance racial and economic justice in our society.
The Postsecondary Value Framework

Pipeline to Equitable Value

For Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and AAPI students, students from low-income backgrounds, and women—and the intersectional identities within and across these groups

Institutional leaders, federal and state policymakers, and other stakeholders deliver:

- **Value for Students**
  By equitably promoting their economic mobility, ensuring opportunity to build wealth, and improving individuals’ wellbeing and academic, civic, and social engagement.

- **Value for Society**
  By equitably increasing attainment to expand the nation’s public economic resources, improve public health and security, and promote civic engagement and empowerment.
## Measuring Economic Returns via Thresholds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>Minimum Economic Return</strong>: A student meets this threshold if they earn at least as much as a high school graduate plus enough to recoup their total net price within ten years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Earnings Premium</strong>: A student meets this threshold if they reach at least the median earnings in their field of study, which accounts for expected variations in pay across fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Earnings Parity</strong>: Informed by the University of Texas System’s research on in-field pay inequities, this threshold measures whether students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and women meet the median earnings of their more advantaged peers (White students, high-income students, or men).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Economic Mobility</strong>: Informed by Opportunity Insights’ measurement of economic mobility across institutions, this threshold measures whether students earn enough to enter the fourth (upper middle) income quintile regardless of field of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Economic Security</strong>: While sufficient earnings can create a stable life, wealth is key to building the type of security needed to withstand life’s financial shocks, so this threshold measures whether students reach median levels of wealth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wealth Parity</strong>: Mirroring the earnings parity threshold, this threshold measures whether students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and women reach the level of wealth attained by their more privileged White, high-income, or male peers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**: Thresholds 0-3 can be estimated at the national level using College Scorecard data with some caveats. Institutions and systems with advanced data collections can measure these thresholds with greater specificity. Due to a lack of quality data to measure wealth, Thresholds 4 and 5 are currently understood as conceptual goals rather than operable analyses.
Equitable Value Explorer

equity.postsecondaryvalue.org/

Median Earnings at Sample College (10 Years After Initial Enrollment)
Compared to Value Thresholds

25th percentile (All Students) $35,999

Median Earnings (All Students) $54,129

75th percentile (All Students) $79,505

Overall T0 $40,558
Overall T3 $46,612
Overall T1 $54,001
Action Agenda

Five actions that span key stakeholder groups

- **Institutional Leaders**
  - Equalize Access to Increase Postsecondary Value

- **Federal Policymakers**
  - Remove Affordability as an Impediment to Postsecondary Value

- **State Policymakers**
  - Eliminate Completion Gaps and Strengthen Post-College Outcomes to Ensure Postsecondary Value

- **Students and Families**
  - Improve Data to Expose and Address Inequitable Postsecondary Value

- **Promote Social Justice by Providing Equitable Postsecondary Value**

[https://postsecondaryvalue.org/](https://postsecondaryvalue.org/)