Public Agenda

Fulfilling Higher Education's Role in Economic Mobility

Lessons from high-performing colleges & universities

Public Agenda

Public Agenda is a national research-to-action organization that digs deep into the key challenges facing our democracy to uncover insights and solutions. We engage with advocates, journalists, policymakers, and the philanthropic community to ensure public voice is heard in conversations that shape our shared future.



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- Kresge Foundation
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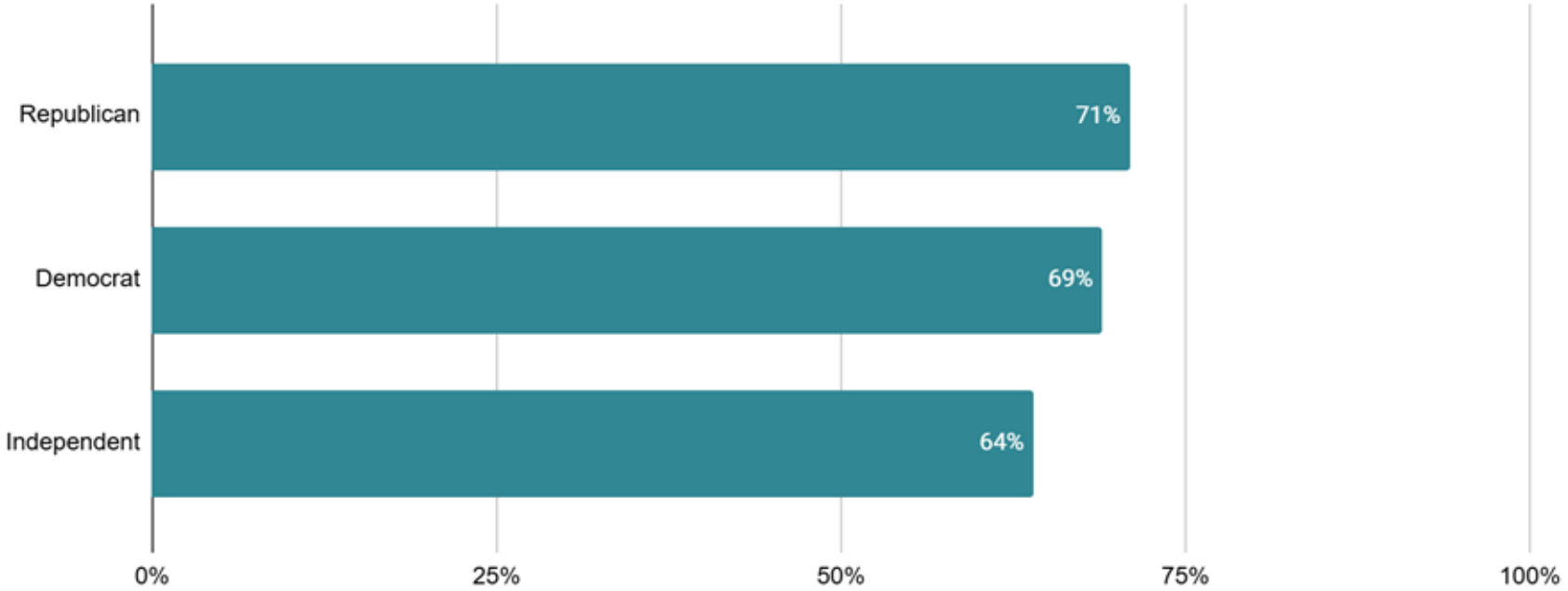
- ECMC Foundation

Trust is eroding. Americans across parties lines see higher education institutions as profit-seeking entities rather than engines of opportunity and public good.

Respondents who strongly or somewhat agree colleges, universities, and community colleges care more about making money than about educating students



Why Moving the Needle Matters

- Every college *should* advance economic mobility, because most students attend a local institution
- Belief in a brighter future directly correlates with trust in democracy
- Economic disparities breed contempt among the disaffected

Contributing factors

1

Access

Share of low-income students

2

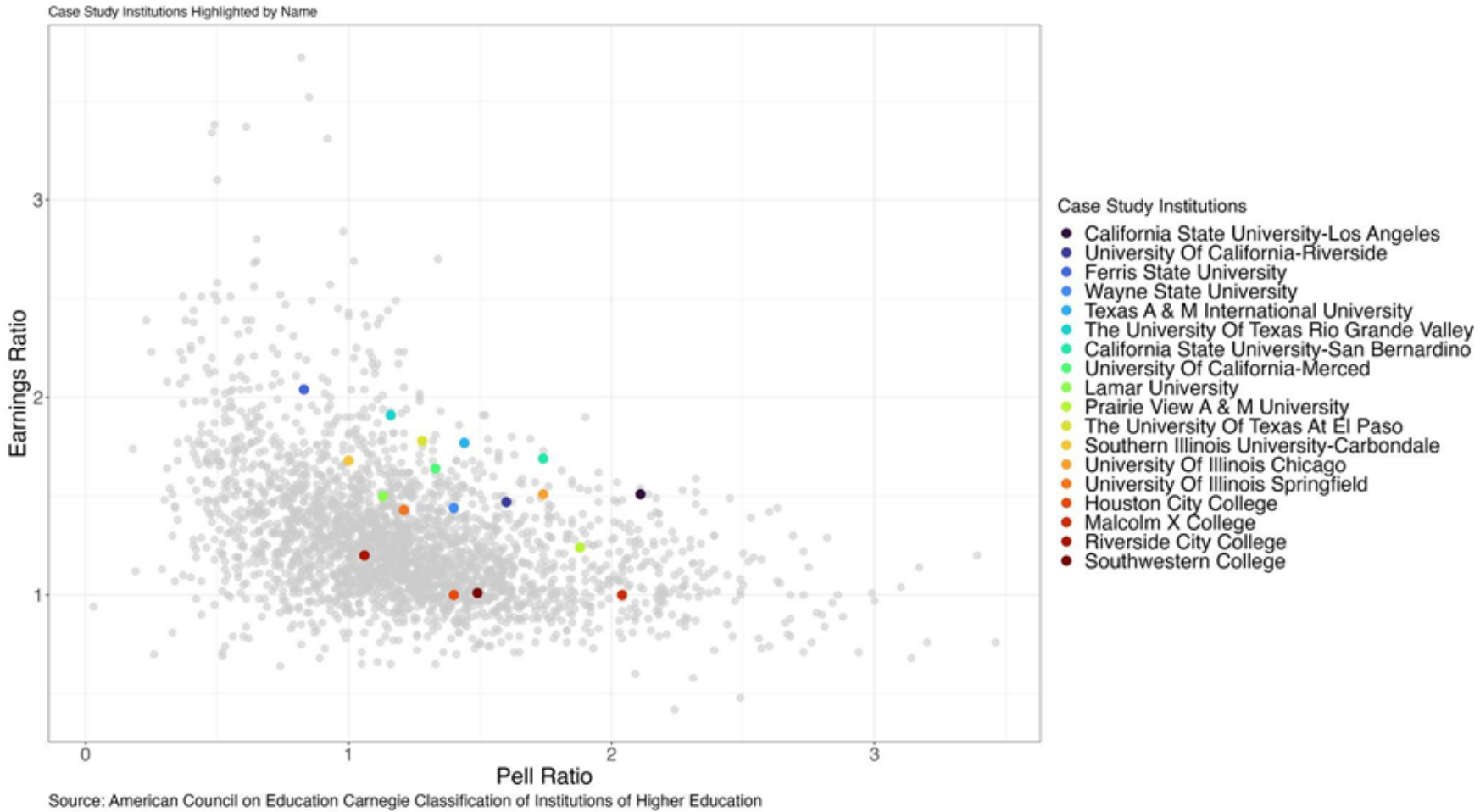
Affordability

Net Cost

3

Earnings

Relative to peers



Source: American Council on Education Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

California

California State University, Los Angeles

University of California, Riverside

California State University, San Bernardino

Riverside City College

Southwestern College

University of California, Merced

Illinois

Malcolm X College

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

University of Illinois Chicago

University of Illinois Springfield

Texas

Texas A&M International University

University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley

Houston City College

Lamar University

Prairie View A&M University

University of Texas at El Paso

Michigan

Ferris State University

Wayne State University

Investments in community and region

- Establish regional collaboration
- Create a permeable campus
- Build relationships with families

Use data creatively to support low-income students

- Identify students who need additional support
- Run experiments
- Align measurement with mission

Bold investments for low-income students

- Making cost of attendance free for low-income students
- Data & Technology
- Academic Advising
- Investments in community and region

Toolkit & resources



Case Studies

Dive into our library of case studies from high-performing institutions across the country to learn what makes them effective agents of economic mobility.



Case Study Themes

See a synthesis of the practices, policies, and culture that span across all effective institutions from our broader case study work.



Quantitative Research

View our quantitative analysis of higher education institutions drawn from national federal higher education data.



Resources

Access our Institutional Planning Guide and Place-based Partnerships for Economic Growth and Individual Opportunity Guide.



Multimedia Stories

Explore audiovisual stories from students and administrators sharing their experiences of economic mobility in higher education.

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Thank You!

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