



69% of Americans Feel the Government Should Provide Free Community College to First-Time Students

Nationwide, 58% Feel This Type of Support Will Provide More Academic Opportunities

July 1, 2021 (Seattle, WA) - According to a new survey from BestColleges.com, 69% of Americans believe the government should provide two years of tuition for first-time students who attend public community colleges. Still, 37% of supporters feel that students should have to qualify for free tuition under specific requirements, such as a specified minimum GPA upon high school graduation (13%), being below a certain income threshold (15%), or both (9%).

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<https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/majority-of-americans-support-free-community-college/>

Some Americans also support government assistance for costs beyond tuition that are incurred by students attending community college. Expenses such as textbooks and learning materials (51%), school fees (44%), technology like laptops and routers (36%), and broadband or internet (35%) are favored to be covered by such assistance. Less-favored costs for which students should receive support include housing (31%), childcare (30%), food stipends (29%) and transportation (28%).

"Prospective students often face financial barriers beyond the cost of tuition that keep them from enrolling," said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., Education Advisor for BestColleges.com. "Additionally, students who do enroll may end up facing financial hardships that make it difficult to successfully complete their programs. These students may feel they are left with no option but to halt their education. For some, additional financial support could be the difference between graduating and dropping out."

When asked whether the government should provide funds to community college students to be used at their discretion, Black respondents (27%) were more than twice as likely as white respondents (11%) to favor such support. There were also generational differences of

opinion on providing discretionary funds for students, with 23% of Generation Z and millennial respondents (ages 18-40) favoring such support compared to only 8% of baby boomers and members of the silent generation (ages 57+). Overall, 15% of Americans support government assistance given to community college students to use at their discretion.

In terms of potential outcomes, 58% of Americans agree that government support for first-time community college students will give more people access to education beyond high school and 44% believe it will result in fewer dropouts. Over half of Americans agree that a community college education helps graduates acquire skills applicable in today's workforce (58%) and increases graduates' lifetime earning potential (55%). When it comes to its significance in the workforce, 44% of Americans agree that a community college education is valued by their employer or employers in their area.

"Community college programs are often deeply rooted in their local towns or regions, partnering with local businesses to provide students with internships, exposure to the field, and jobs after graduation," said Dr. Venable. "Increased access to education beyond high school will expand opportunities for many entering the workforce."

Americans' connection to community college education is largely through the people in their lives, with 65% reporting they have family or friends who have attended, transferred from, or graduated from a community college. About one-third of respondents attended, transferred from, or graduated from a community college themselves (35%). Additionally, 34% of respondents report having such a school in their local area. Still, 39% of Americans say they have no connection to community college education.

Methodology

BestColleges.com commissioned YouGov PLC to conduct the survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov PLC. The total sample size was 2,613 adults. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all U.S. adults (aged 18+). Fieldwork was undertaken on June 8-10, 2021. The survey was carried out online and meets rigorous quality standards.

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