INFORMATION ITEM

Holding Texas Colleges Accountable for Student Loan Debt and Earnings Outcomes: 2022

by Andrew Gillen, Ph.D.
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The report summarized here is The Texas Public Policy Foundation's third annual report identifying "low-performing programs" at Texas public colleges and universities. The study on which the report is based used newly available federal data on student loan debt and early career earnings of recent college graduates to identify programs at public Texas colleges and universities that leave their students with excessive student loan debt.

The study rates instructional programs at Texas public colleges and universities on a four-point scale.

- <u>Reward</u> (Student debt less than or equal to 75% of post-graduation earnings.) Program graduates are prepared for success with high earnings relative to debt. Programs could be rewarded with performance bonus funding and/or exemptions from standard regulatory oversight.
- <u>Monitor</u> (Student debt is greater than 75%, but less than 100%, of post-graduation earnings.) Most graduates from these programs probably are set up for success, but some may have excessive debt. Programs should be monitored but otherwise not interfered with.
- <u>Sanction</u> (Student debt is greater than 100%, but less than 125%, of post-graduation earnings.) Too many graduates from these programs have excessive debt. Programs should face sanctions ranging from reduced funding to enrollment restrictions.
- <u>Sunset</u> (Student debt is greater than 125% of post-graduation earnings.) Most graduates from these programs have excessive debt, and many are unlikely to be able to repay their student loan debt. Programs should be phased out by preventing enrollment of new students.

In the report, "low performing programs" were defined as college and university programs that fell into the "Sanction" or "Sunset" categories. A total of 58 "low-performing programs" were specifically identified in Table 6. The report suggests that students should be wary about enrolling in these programs, colleges should improve or phase them out, and policymakers should hold them accountable. None of Collin College's programs fell into the "low performing" category.

The report shows the number of community and technical college (CTC) programs that fell into the “Reward” category without identifying any of the programs. Six Collin College programs fell into that “high performing” category. The average number of “Reward” programs among Texas CTCs was 3.2, and the median was 2. A total of 17 CTCs had zero “Reward” programs, and Texas State Technical College had the greatest number at 18. Collin College was in the 78th percentile among CTCs in the number of “Reward” programs.

Finally, the report identified the number of programs at each institution for which data had to be suppressed because the numbers of program completers were so small that revealing results might compromise student privacy. A total of 26 Collin College programs had data suppressed. While this may seem like a substantial number, it is relatively low compared to other CTCs. Both the mean and median were 33. Among Collin’s “very large” Texas peer institutions, only Tarrant County College (at 29) and Dallas College North Lake Campus (at 30) joined Collin College below the statewide mean and median. Since completions are a function of enrollment, Collin’s relatively low number of suppressed programs suggests that the College appears to be doing relatively well at offering programs that meet community needs and moving students through those programs to completion.

Resource:

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