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## **New Report Finds a Majority of Americans Feel Colleges Care More about Their Bottom Line than Education of Students**

*Survey finds Americans are skeptical that colleges and universities are doing all they can to keep costs under control*

NEW YORK (February 17, 2010) — Six out of 10 Americans believe that colleges mainly care about their own bottom lines instead of making sure that students have a good educational experience, according to new report from Public Agenda and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Also, nearly two-thirds of those polled (64 percent) believe that colleges and universities should use federal stimulus funds to hold down tuition increases, even if it means cutbacks in campus programs and services.

The report, *Squeeze Play 2010*, summarizes findings of a survey of 1,031 adults conducted in December 2009. This poll is the latest in a series of national surveys of public attitudes about college affordability and accessibility dating back to 1993.

The perception that colleges are focusing more on dollars and cents than on students' educational needs has intensified during the recession, jumping eight points in just two years. At the same time, Americans remain skeptical that colleges and universities are doing everything they can to keep costs down. Sixty percent of Americans believe that colleges could take in more students without hiking prices or reducing quality and more than half (54 percent) agree that colleges could spend less and still maintain quality education for students.

"Americans have put a lot of faith and a lot of money in their colleges and universities, but they're increasingly disappointed in higher education's choices and performance," said Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center. "People are looking for innovation and productivity improvements in higher education, and they're just not seeing them. Even in a time of budget cuts, the public is not buying the argument that the only alternative available to colleges and universities is higher tuition."

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The survey also found that:

- The percentage of Americans that believe college is essential for success in the work world remains at a high point (55 percent, up 24 percentage points since 2000). Additionally, 90 percent of parents of high school students surveyed believe that their child is going to college. However, the percentage believing that the vast majority of qualified, motivated students have the opportunity to attend college remains at a low of 28 percent.
- While a majority of Americans (62 percent) believe that almost anyone who needs financial help to go to college can get loans and grants, 83 percent agree that students have to borrow too much money to pay for higher education.
- Just under two-thirds (65 percent) say that higher education costs are rising at a faster rate than other things, up seven points since 2007, and nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of them say it is either going up at the same rate or faster than health care costs.

“The ‘misery index’ when it comes to higher education is climbing--Americans are discovering that they can’t live without higher education, but they increasingly can’t live with skyrocketing prices and reduced access,” said John Immerwahr, senior research fellow at Public Agenda. “Leaders in Washington and in the states should not be surprised to see more public interest in college affordability in this campaign season and beyond.”

*Squeeze Play 2010* and previous survey reports are available at <http://www.publicagenda.org> and <http://www.highereducation.org>.

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**Public Agenda** is a nonpartisan and nonprofit organization founded by social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in 1975 to help American leaders better understand the public’s point of view and to help citizens know more about critical policy issues so they can make thoughtful, informed decisions.

**The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education** promotes public policies that enhance Americans’ opportunities to pursue and achieve a quality higher education. Established in 1998 by a consortium of national foundations, the National Center is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. It is not associated with any institution of higher education, with any political party, or with any government agency.