

“Who Profits? Students’ Experiences at For-Profit Colleges”**“A Better Deal? Comparing Students’ Experiences with Online Degrees at For-Profit and Nonprofit Colleges”**

Public Agenda

Fielded March 17 to May 31, 2022

Data collected by SSRS

Released 2023

<https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/for-profit-colleges-2023/>

<https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/online-colleges-2023/>

Methodology and Topline

The findings in “Who Profits? Students’ Experiences at For-Profit Colleges” and “A Better Deal? Comparing Students’ Experiences with Online Degrees at For-Profit and Nonprofit Colleges” are based on a national survey of 1,218 adult Americans ages 18 and older from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii.

The survey was designed by Public Agenda and fielded online March 17 to May 31, 2022 by SSRS in English (n=1,209) and Spanish (n=9). It includes representative samples of 595 for-profit college attendees; 406 community college students; and 217 alumni of online degree programs at public and private nonprofit colleges. The for-profit attendees sample includes representative subsamples of alumni who completed their degrees or certificates at for-profit colleges within fifteen years of fielding (n=272); students currently enrolled at for-profit colleges at the time of fielding (n=235); and non-completers i.e., people who started a degree or certificate at a for-profit college within fifteen years of fielding, did not complete it, and never subsequently completed elsewhere (n=88).

Selected survey questions are tracked from a 2013 survey of current for-profit students, for-profit alumni, and adult prospective students titled, “Profiting Higher Education? What Students, Alumni and Employers Think About For-Profit Colleges,” available at <https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/profitting-higher-education/>.¹

The research included five demographically diverse online focus groups conducted by Public Agenda in October 2021. Three focus groups were conducted with current students at for-profit colleges, alumni of for-profit colleges who had graduated within seven years, and non-completers who had attended for-profit colleges within the past seven years. Two focus groups were conducted with current students or alumni of online degree programs at public or private non-profit colleges who had graduated within the past seven years.

This research was supported by Arnold Ventures. When referencing this research, please cite Public Agenda. For questions about this research, please email research@publicagenda.org.

¹ Questions that are tracked from the 2013 survey are identified by (T) in the following topline data.

Survey Sampling

Invitations to complete the survey were sent directly to potential respondents by one of several online panel companies engaged in this research. Each survey respondent underwent an extensive screening process where they were first asked a series of questions to establish first their “student status” as either: 1) a current student, 2) alumni within the past 7 years, or 3) previously enrolled in a higher education instruction within the past 7 years but did not complete a degree.

Respondents were then screened for “institution type.” First they were asked to identify from a list of qualifying institutions their current institution or the higher education institution in which they were most recently enrolled. The list of qualifying institutions categorized each higher education institution as either: (1) Public or private non-profit 4-year institutions; (2) Private, for-profit institutions; and (3) Public or Private, non-profit community colleges. The qualifying list of institutions, including the categorization of institution type, was created by Public Agenda using the [IPEDS database](#) of institutions registered on IPEDS from 2014 to 2020. Most institutions (whether qualifying or not) were pre-listed in the survey, but in the event a respondent attended another school, there was also the opportunity to list the institution via an “other/specify.” Those who used the “other/specify” option were then asked to self-identify whether or not their school was a for-profit, or they could indicate they did not know whether or not their school was for-profit or not. Upon completing screening for “student status” and “institution type,” if a respondent was categorized as alumni at a public or private non-profit 4-year institution they were asked about online courses and only those who completed all courses online were included in the sample.²

Based on “student status” and “institution type,” respondents either qualified as: 1) current for-profit student, 2) alumni for-profit, 3) non-completer for-profit, 4) current community college student, 5) nonprofit online alumni. Respondents were then directed to complete corresponding survey. Those who did not fit into one of the five groups based on their “student status” and “institution type” categorization were screened out.

During the field period, SSRS conducted a weekly review of the “other/specify” institution names provided by respondents. SSRS then provided Public Agenda with updates of their review, along with recommendations about whether each completed interview should be removed.³ If Public Agenda could not match the name of an institution to their list of qualifying institutions, the interview was removed. Table 1 provides counts of the number of completed

² Researchers used the IPEDS definition of “distance learning” (DE), which is where courses and programs are considered DE if ALL of their instructional portions can be completed remotely. Non-instructional in-person requirements (e.g., orientation and testing) do not exclude a course or program from being classified as exclusively DE. More information about distance learning is available [here](#).

³ Current and non-completers who used the “other/specify” option and entered the name of their institution, self-identified their school as non-profit or they were unsure if they attended a non-profit or for-profit, were automatically terminated based on SSRS’s recommendation.

interviews that were removed by respondent type. Completed interviews with respondents who did not attend a qualifying institution were removed from the final data files.

Table 1: Counts of Completed Interviews & Interviews with Respondents from Qualifying Institutions by Type of Student

Student Type	Completes	Removals (did not attend qualifying institution)	Qualified completes
Current For-Profit	458	223	235
For-Profit Alumni	529	257	272
For-profit Non-Completers	170	82	88
Current Community College	406	0	406
Nonprofit online alumni	303	86	217
Total	1,866	648	1,218

Survey Fielding and Weighting

The survey was in the field from March 17 to May 31, 2022. The extended length of survey fielding was due to two challenges: collecting the entire target sample from probability-based sources would have been cost- and time- prohibitive, and there are no externally available weighting benchmarks for the survey population. In order to obtain a sufficient sample size and allow for valid weighting in a cost-effective manner, the study was conducted using a hybrid sample design that included a probability sample of 336 respondents from the SSRS Opinion Panel and a nonprobability sample of 882 respondents from several opt-in online panel vendors. The hybrid sample was weighted using SSRS' Encipher-Hybrid calibration solution. Encipher-Hybrid is an SSRS-developed methodology that corrects for both demographic and non-demographic differences between probability and nonprobability samples, reducing any selection bias associated with this inclusion of nonprobability respondents. The hybrid design allowed SSRS to use the probability sample to derive demographic and non-demographic weighting benchmarks for the target population, to which the full hybrid sample could then be weighted.

Prior to the field period, SSRS programmed the study into its Confrmint platform for web and CATI administration in English and Spanish. The web program was optimized for administration via smartphone or other mobile handheld devices. Extensive checking of the program was conducted to ensure that skip patterns followed the design of the questionnaire. The web program was checked on multiple devices, including desktop computers and handheld mobile devices, and different web browsers in order to ensure consistent and optimized visualization across devices and web browsers.

For the SSRS Opinion Panel sample, the response rate to this study was 26.18%, which was calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Response Rate 3 (RR3). The cumulative response rate to the SSRS Opinion sample, which accounts for the response rate to the Panel recruitment process, was 1.39%.

The final sample of 1,218 completes (336 probability and 882 nonprobability) was weighted to be representative of adults 18+ who are 1) alumni – for profit institution, 2) current students – for profit institutions, 3) lapsed students – for profit institutions, 4) current students – community colleges, 5) alumni of distance learning programs – public or nonprofit private institutions. Hybrid samples that blend probability and nonprobability completes require special weighting procedures. Extensive empirical research suggests that nonprobability samples, such as those obtained from online panel vendors, differ from the general population in ways that cannot be corrected by weighting only on demographics. Correcting for non-demographic differences between probability and nonprobability completes can therefore help minimize the risk of selection bias in study outcomes.

Margins of sampling error are calculated to provide a reasonable range for the error that may exist in an estimate due to random sampling fluctuations. The margins of sampling error reported in here are based on the hybrid sample, which includes 336 probability cases and 882 non-probability cases.

**A survey of for-profit and private or public nonprofit higher education attendees
(ages 18+)**

Interview dates: March 17 to May 31, 2022

For-profit enrollees: N=595

Margin of error: ± 7.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence interval

Margins of error for subgroups are larger

Current community college students: N=406

Margin of error: ± 8.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence interval

Non-profit online alumni: N=217

Margin of error: ± 11.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence interval

NOTE: * = less than 0.5%, - = no respondents. Responses may not always total 100 percent due to rounding.

SCREENER QUESTIONNAIRE

S1. What is your age?

	For-profit alumni N=272	For-profit current students N=235	For-profit non-completers N=88	Current community college students N=406	Nonprofit online alumni N=217
18-29	40	63	46	66	41
30-49	49	32	46	31	42
50-64	10	4	7	4	17
65+	1	1	-	-	-

Z10. Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Yes	16	30	13	40	21
No	83	70	87	59	79
Web blank	1	-	-	1	-

Z11. Do you consider yourself white, black or African American, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, mixed race or some other race?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
White	56	53	44	59	61
Black or African American	35	33	39	15	24
Asian/Chinese/Japanese	2	1	-	6	1
Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native	1	5	1	3	2
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	1	1	*	*	*
Mixed	2	5	10	10	8
Hispanic	1	*	2	4	1
Another Race	-	1	-	*	-
Web blank	1	*	4	3	2

SEX. What is your gender?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Male	43	40	44	43	43
Female	57	60	56	56	57
Transgender	*	-	-	1	*
Other	*	-	-	*	-

S2. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Less than high school	-	-	-	-	-
High school incomplete	-	-	-	-	-
High school graduate	18	28	27	21	6
Some college, no degree (includes some community college)	26	45	73	56	18
Two year associate degree from a college or university	28	27	-	23	7
Four year college or university degree	28	-	-	-	68

S2a. Have you earned a certificate – not a degree— for completing a program at a trade school, technical school, or community college?

BASE: Asked if S2 was 'High school graduate' or 'Some college, no degree'

	For-profit alumni (N=108)	For-profit current students (N=173)	For-profit non-completers (N=88)	Current community college students (314)	Nonprofit online alumni (N=46)
Yes	100	73	-	47	100
No	-	27	100	53	-

S2b. Have you ever been enrolled as a student at a college or at a vocational or technical school to complete a certificate or degree?

BASE: Asked if S2a was 'No'

	For-profit current students (N=15)	For-profit non-completers (N=26)	Current community college students (N=20)
Yes	100	100	100
No	-	-	-

S3. Are you currently a student at a college or at a vocational or technical school to complete a certificate or degree?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Yes	-	100	-	100	-
No	100	-	100	-	100

S5a. What is the name of the college or school you currently attend?/What is the name of the college or school you graduated from with your highest certificate or degree?/What is the name of the college or school you were most recently enrolled in?

Due to the variety of responses, please email research@publicagenda.org to request data.

S7.2 How many courses did you take online at the college from which you earned your highest degree or certificate?

BASE: All nonprofit online alumni

	Nonprofit online alumni
All courses online	100
Most courses online	-
Some courses online	-
No courses online	-

S4a. Are you looking to graduate from this college or school with a certificate, an associate's degree or with a bachelor's degree or are you taking classes without looking to graduate from this school?

BASE: All for-profit current students and current community college students

	For-profit current students	Current community college students
Certificate	24	19
Associate's degree	23	56
Bachelor's degree	47	16
Taking classes but not looking to graduate from this school	1	6
Some other degree	4	3

Q10(T). Are you planning on transferring to a four-year college in the future?

BASE: Asked if S4a was 'Taking classes but not looking to graduate' or 'Some other degree'

	For-profit current students (N=9)	Current community college students (N=31)
Yes	21	92
No	79	8

S4B. Were you looking to graduate from this college or school with a certificate, an associate's degree or with a bachelor's degree or were you taking classes without looking to graduate from this school?

BASE: All For-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
Certificate	23
Associate's degree	22
Bachelor's degree	55
Taking classes but not looking to graduate from this school	*
Some other degree	*

Q10A. Were you planning on transferring to a four-year college in the future?

BASE: Ask if S4b was 'Taking classes but not looking to graduate' or 'Some other degree'

	For-profit non-completers (N=5)
Yes	38
No	62

S6a. What year did you graduate or complete your degree or certificate from this school?

BASE: All for-profit alumni and all nonprofit online alumni

	For-profit alumni	Nonprofit Online Alumni
2007	-	*
2008	-	*
2009	1	1
2010	2	*
2011	1	1
2012	1	3
2013	1	2
2014	1	3
2015	9	7
2016	13	7
2017	12	13
2018	14	10
2019	13	11
2020	18	21
2021	9	15
2022	6	5

S6b. What is the most recent year you were enrolled in that college or school?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
2015	11
2016	21
2017	16
2018	13
2019	22
2020	1
2021	4
2022	12

MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE
SECTION I: GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Q1(T). Which of the following best describes your view about a college education?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
A college education is necessary to be successful in today's work world	25	52	22	37	22
There are many ways to succeed in today's work world without a college degree	75	48	78	63	78

SECTION II: CURRENT/MOST RECENT ENROLLMENT DETAILS

Q3. How many colleges have you ever been enrolled in, whether or not you earned a degree or certificate there?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
1	47	39	40	56	19
2	32	31	43	32	46
3 or more	21	30	17	12	36

Q3b. Of the [INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q3] colleges you have been enrolled in, from how many of these colleges have you earned a degree or certificate?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
0	18	51	96	54	5
1	66	44	4	42	48
2	11	2	-	4	39
3 or more	5	3	-	*	9

Q4(T). Which of these best describes the MAIN reason you are pursuing this “degree”/ “certificate”)?
/Which of these best describes the MAIN reason why you are enrolled at [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a]

BASE: All for-profit current students and all current community college students

	For-profit current students	Current community college students
To get ahead in your current job	21	18
To get a different kind of job altogether	51	42
To get a good education and learn about the world	24	29
Some other reason	3	11

Q5(T). Are you a full-time or a part-time student?

BASE: All for-profit current students and all current community college students

	For-profit current students	Current community college students
Full-time	66	52
Part-time	34	48

Q7(T). Overall, how satisfied, or dissatisfied are you with your school?

BASE: All for-profit current students and all current community college students

	For-profit current students	Current community college students
Satisfied (NET)	87	92
Very satisfied	58	46
Somewhat satisfied	29	46
Dissatisfied (NET)	13	8
Somewhat dissatisfied	8	8
Very dissatisfied	4	*

Q11(T). Which of these best describes the MAIN reason you pursued this degree or certificate?

BASE: All for-profit alumni and all nonprofit online alumni

	For-profit alumni	Nonprofit online alumni
To get ahead in your current job	27	52
To get a different kind of job altogether	47	25
To get a good education and learn about the world	26	22
Some other reason	-	-

Q12(T). How many years did it take for you to complete this degree or certificate?

BASE: All for-profit alumni and all nonprofit online alumni

	For-Profit Alumni	Nonprofit Online Alumni
Less than 1 year	18	11
1 year but less than 2	21	21
2 years but less than 3	31	24
3 years but less than 4	4	14
4 years but less than 6	16	20
6 years or more	4	10
Don't know	5	-

Q13(T). Were you a full-time or a part-time student?

BASE: All for-profit alumni and all nonprofit online alumni

	For-Profit Alumni	Nonprofit Online Alumni
Full-time	76	73
Part-time	24	27

Q15(T). Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your school?

BASE: All for-profit alumni and all nonprofit online alumni

	For-Profit Alumni	Nonprofit Online Alumni
Satisfied (NET)	85	97
Very satisfied	46	70
Somewhat satisfied	40	27
Dissatisfied (NET)	15	3
Somewhat dissatisfied	10	2
Very dissatisfied	4	2

Q19. For how many years were you enrolled in this college?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
Less than 1 year	46
1 year but less than 2	24
2 years but less than 3	18
3 years but less than 4	8
4 years but less than 6	4
6 years or more	-
Don't know	-

Q21. Which of these best describes the MAIN reason you were pursuing this degree or certificate?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
To get ahead in your current job	25
To get a different kind of job altogether	30
To get a good education and learn about the world	45

Q22. Were you a full-time or a part-time student?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
Full-time	57
Part-time	43

Q24. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your school?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
Satisfied (NET)	64
Very satisfied	37
Somewhat satisfied	27
Dissatisfied (NET)	36
Somewhat dissatisfied	28
Very dissatisfied	8

Q25. What were the reasons that you did not continue your education at [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a]?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
College shut down or closed	12
College lost accreditation	6
College was not providing a good education	5
College did not offer courses online	4
College did not accept enough transfer credits from another college that you previously attended	5
College did not offer classes at convenient times for your schedule	9
Decided that you did not need to get a college degree or certificate after all	5
Did not understand the graduation requirements	5
Could not afford it anymore	27
Personal or family responsibilities made it hard to stay in college	62
Physical health reasons made it hard to stay in college	4
Mental health reasons made it hard to stay in college	26
Work responsibilities made it hard to stay in college	30
Commuting to the college became difficult	23
To avoid COVID-19	1

Q26. Here are some challenges that other people have experienced as a result of not completing a college degree or certificate. As a result of not completing your degree or certificate at [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a], have you been affected in any of the following ways?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
Made it more difficult to pay off student loans or other college debts	29
Made it more difficult to afford enrolling in another college	30
Credit score went down	13
Made it more difficult to afford major purchases like a car or a home	11
Made you dislike college in general	8
Made you feel discouraged about enrolling in another college	33
Made you distrust colleges in general	7
Made you feel depressed or anxious	41
Has not affected you negatively at all	29

Q31. In the next two years, how likely is it that you will enroll in a college again to try to earn a degree or certificate?

BASE: All for-profit non-completers

	For-profit non-completers
Will (NET)	41
Definitely will	16
Probably will	25
Won't (NET)	56
Probably won't	44
Definitely won't	13
Not sure	3

SECTION III: EDUCATION JOURNEY, BEFORE ENROLLING INFORMATION SOURCES AND DECISION-MAKING

Q39. Which of the following was most important to you when choosing [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a]?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
a. Convenient location	20	15	11	34	6
b. Affordable tuition	34	29	29	59	45
c. Learning workplace-relevant skills	21	21	25	18	14
d. Clearly structured programs so students know exactly which classes they need to take	26	28	29	18	23
e. Classes offered at convenient times	30	33	13	30	29
f. Online classes available	49	65	54	44	83
g. Opportunities for internships and work experiences	12	20	10	14	4
h. The college's reputation among employers	6	8	16	6	13
i. Small number of students in each class	23	11	15	12	8
j. Opportunity to explore different subjects before picking a major	4	19	24	7	4
k. Diverse student body	6	4	3	11	3
m. None of these	7	1	3	2	1

Q33. Before you picked [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a] how did you learn about colleges and programs?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
a. Interactive websites that allow people to rank and compare college according to personal priorities	21	16	15	11	13
b. Individual college websites	17	29	25	24	40
c. College recruiters who promote and market their school	10	19	25	15	11
d. High school guidance counselors	17	16	18	33	9
e. Guidance counselors at individual colleges	2	4	8	9	6
f. Financial aid advisers	9	13	13	16	6
g. Books with information on colleges and programs	6	17	5	3	3
h. Television commercials, billboards or other ads	22	24	18	12	18
i. Friends, family or colleagues	32	28	41	42	33
j. An employer	8	8	3	5	18
k. A college counselor or advisor who charged money for their services	1	4	3	7	6
l. A college counselor or advisor at a high school or a community organization who was free of charge	7	9	23	21	7
m. None of these	10	5	7	10	6

Q34. When you were trying to learn about colleges, did you have...

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Too much information	6	16	6	14	11
About the right amount of information	75	71	59	58	73
Too little information	19	13	35	28	16

Q36. How easy or difficult was it to understand the information about colleges that you found?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Easy (NET)	79	84	75	74	86
Very easy	31	54	17	30	40
Somewhat easy	49	30	59	44	47
Difficult (NET)	21	16	25	26	14
Somewhat difficult	20	15	24	22	13
Very difficult	*	2	1	4	1

Q40a. And how much attention **did you personally** pay to the following information before deciding which school to attend?

a. The number of years it takes the average student to graduate

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Paid attention (NET)	93	98	91	92	94
A great deal of attention	47	45	53	42	49
Some attention	41	39	36	39	33
Only a little attention	5	14	1	12	12
No attention at all	7	2	9	8	6

Q40a. And how much attention did you personally pay to the following information before deciding which school to attend? (*Continued*)

b. What jobs and salaries typical graduates get

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Paid attention (NET)	93	96	99	93	85
A great deal of attention	48	56	52	47	38
Some attention	36	28	29	36	35
Only a little attention	9	12	19	9	13
No attention at all	7	4	1	7	15

c. The amount of debt the average student graduates with

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Paid attention (NET)	85	92	69	94	87
A great deal of attention	42	50	31	52	51
Some attention	34	32	32	29	26
Only a little attention	10	10	6	14	10
No attention at all	15	8	31	6	13

d. How affordable the college is

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Paid attention (NET)	95	99	96	95	97
A great deal of attention	58	56	61	74	75
Some attention	28	38	31	17	18
Only a little attention	9	5	4	4	4
No attention at all	4	1	4	5	3
Web blank	1	-	-	*	-

Q40a. And how much attention did you personally pay to the following information before deciding which school to attend? (*Continued*)

e. Whether the college is accredited or not

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Paid attention (NET)	90	97	83	88	98
A great deal of attention	50	60	42	47	66
Some attention	33	27	29	29	22
Only a little attention	6	10	13	12	10
No attention at all	10	3	17	12	2

f. How easy it is to transfer credits TO other colleges

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Paid attention (NET)	77	84	67	86	85
A great deal of attention	26	31	17	47	44
Some attention	32	32	37	27	23
Only a little attention	19	22	14	12	19
No attention at all	23	16	33	14	15

g. How easy it is to transfer credits FROM other colleges

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Paid attention (NET)	78	87	73	86	92
A great deal of attention	32	41	18	38	57
Some attention	27	32	37	32	25
Only a little attention	19	14	18	16	10
No attention at all	22	13	27	14	8

Q40(T) How much attention **should students** pay to the following information before deciding which school to attend?

a. The number of years it takes the average student to graduate

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Should pay attention (NET)	97	98	100	98	99
A great deal of attention	60	63	58	51	53
Some attention	33	27	31	35	35
Only a little attention	4	9	11	13	11
No attention at all	3	*	-	2	1
Web blank	-	1	-	-	-

b. What jobs and salaries typical graduates get

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Should pay attention (NET)	98	100	99	98	92
A great deal of attention	66	63	76	56	58
Some attention	27	26	21	38	25
Only a little attention	5	11	2	4	8
No attention at all	2	*	1	2	8

c. The amount of debt the average student graduates with

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Should pay attention (NET)	94	98	93	99	97
A great deal of attention	62	65	64	66	72
Some attention	26	23	26	25	16
Only a little attention	6	10	4	8	9
No attention at all	6	2	7	1	3

Q40(T) How much attention should students pay to the following information before deciding which school to attend? (*Continued*)

d. How affordable the college is

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Should pay attention (NET)	100	99	98	99	98
A great deal of attention	72	62	74	76	80
Some attention	20	28	20	20	14
Only a little attention	8	9	4	3	3
No attention at all	*	1	2	1	2
Web blank	-	*	-	-	-

e. Whether the college is accredited or not

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Should pay attention (NET)	96	99	98	97	98
A great deal of attention	67	68	42	52	71
Some attention	24	25	46	35	17
Only a little attention	5	6	10	9	9
No attention at all	4	1	2	3	2

f. How easy it is to transfer credits TO other colleges

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Should pay attention (NET)	91	99	95	98	95
A great deal of attention	55	58	47	55	54
Some attention	25	26	33	35	30
Only a little attention	11	15	15	8	11
No attention at all	9	1	5	2	5

Q40(T) How much attention should students pay to the following information before deciding which school to attend? (*Continued*)

g. How easy it is for students to transfer credits FROM other colleges

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Should pay attention (NET)	92	99	93	98	95
A great deal of attention	53	61	49	54	62
Some attention	30	28	43	36	27
Only a little attention	9	10	2	8	5
No attention at all	8	1	7	2	5

Q42. Before enrolling in [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a], how many other colleges, if any, did you apply to or seriously consider applying to?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
None	84	83	81	84	83
1	6	2	8	3	4
2	6	2	*	7	4
3 or more	4	13	11	6	9

SECTION IV: EDUCATION JOURNEY, DURING/WHILE GETTING DEGREE

Q7.1 How many courses did you take online at [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a]?

BASE: All for-profit alumni, all for-profit current students, all for-profit non-completers and all current-community college students

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students
All/most (NET)	62	80	61	48
All courses online	53	60	47	22
Most courses online	9	20	14	26
Some/none (NET)	38	20	39	52
Some courses online	14	15	17	40
No courses online	24	4	23	11

Q4.3 When you take classes online, are...?/When you took classes online were...?

BASE: All nonprofit online alumni or asked if Q7.1 was 'all courses online' or 'most courses online'

	For-profit alumni (N=189)	For-profit current students (N=188)	For-profit non-completers (N=53)	Current community college students (N=236)	Nonprofit online alumni (N=198)
All/most synchronous (NET)	45	31	29	39	29
All of them synchronous	24	17	13	14	14
Most of them synchronous	21	14	16	25	15
Most/all asynchronous (NET)	55	69	71	61	71
Most of them asynchronous	24	28	27	21	24
All of them asynchronous	31	42	45	40	47

Q100. Why did you enroll in an online-only degree or certificate program?

BASE: All nonprofit online alumni

	Nonprofit Online Alumni
More convenient for your schedule	67
Your employer preferred it	2
More affordable	35
The program you wanted was only offered online	10
To avoid COVID-19	9
Online programs were the best option available to you	45
Mental health reasons	5
Physical health reasons	6
Other	4
Not asked	8

Q100a. Why are you taking all or most of your classes online?/Why did you take all or most of your classes online?

BASE: Asked if Q7.1 was 'all courses online' or 'most courses online'

	For-profit alumni (N=189)	For-profit current students (N=188)	For-profit non-completers (N=53)	Current community college students (N=236)
More convenient for your schedule	16	24	47	28
Your employer preferred it	5	6	6	12
More affordable	15	37	25	29
The classes you want are/wanted were only offered online	14	29	20	28
To avoid COVID-19	4	22	1	36
Mental health reasons	6	10	32	17
Physical health reasons	4	10	11	16
Other	17	18	25	23
Not asked	44	-	-	-

SECTION V: ACADEMICS, ADVISING AND TRANSFERS

Q67. For each of the following please indicate if your school is succeeding or falling short? /
For each of the following please indicate if your school succeeded or fell short?

a. Giving students effective guidance so they can stay on track

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	74	80	74	81	90
Falling short/Fell short	26	20	26	18	10
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

b. Making top-notch tutors easily available when students need help

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	60	67	41	74	74
Falling short/Fell short	40	33	59	24	26
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

Q67. For each of the following please indicate if your school is succeeding or falling short? /
For each of the following please indicate if your school succeeded or fell short? (*Continued*)

c. Giving students hands-on help with financial aid applications

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	76	77	70	79	65
Falling short/Fell short	24	23	30	21	35
Web blank	-	-	-	*	-

e. Having instructors who care about their students and know how to teach

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	76	81	79	83	91
Falling short/Fell short	24	19	21	17	9
Web blank	-	-	-	*	-

f. Providing students with valuable internships and work experience outside the classroom

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	60	80	40	71	56
Falling short/Fell short	40	20	60	28	44
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

g. Keeping class sizes small

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	90	80	62	86	86
Falling short/Fell short	10	20	38	14	14
Web blank	-	-	-	*	-

h. Providing opportunities to make professional connections with other students

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	63	83	67	73	76
Falling short/Fell short	37	17	33	26	24
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

Q67. For each of the following please indicate if your school is succeeding or falling short? /
For each of the following please indicate if your school succeeded or fell short? (*Continued*)

i. Providing opportunities to make friends with other students

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	69	82	64	74	71
Falling short/Fell short	31	18	36	25	29
Web blank	-	*	-	1	-

j. Teaching real-world skills for the workplace

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	72	87	66	80	75
Falling short/Fell short	28	13	34	20	25
Web blank	-	-	-	*	-

k. Health services, including mental and physical health care for students

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	34	75	35	68	-
Falling short/Fell short	38	25	65	31	-
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-
Not asked	28	-	-	-	-
Not asked – nonprofit online alumni	-	-	-	-	100

l. Career services or job placement assistance

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current Community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	57	82	63	70	60
Falling short/Fell short	43	18	37	29	40
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

m. Clearly structured programs so students know exactly which classes they need to take

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Succeeding/Succeeded	86	84	68	82	92
Falling short/Fell short	14	16	32	17	8
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

SECTION VI: MEETING PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Q57. Did it take you ...?

BASE: All for-profit alumni and all nonprofit online alumni

	For-profit alumni	Nonprofit online alumni
More time than you expected to graduate	29	28
About as much time as you expected to graduate	61	53
Less time than you expected to graduate	10	19

Q57a. Do you think it will take you ...?

BASE: All current for-profit students and all current community college students

	Current for-profit students	Current community college students
More time than you expected to graduate	32	38
About as much time as you expected to graduate	57	55
Less time than you expected to graduate	10	6
Don't know	*	*

SECTION VII: EXPERIENCE WITH OR EXPECTATIONS REGARDING TRANSFERRING CREDITS

Q62. Did you try to transfer any credits when you enrolled [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a]?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Yes, you tried to transfer credits	35	43	27	32	68
No, you did not try to transfer credits	33	33	23	36	17
No, you did not have any credits to transfer	32	24	49	32	15

Q63. How easy or difficult was the process of transferring credits?

BASE: Asked if Q62 was 'Yes, you tried to transfer credits'

	For-profit alumni (N=96)	For-profit current students (N=93)	For-profit non-completers (N=21)	Current community college students (N=146)	Nonprofit online alumni (125)
Easy (NET)	79	76	60	76	97
Very easy	45	58	47	40	70
Somewhat easy	34	18	14	36	28
Difficult (NET)	21	24	40	24	3
Somewhat difficult	19	12	28	17	2
Very difficult	2	12	12	7	*

SECTION VIII: EDUCATION JOURNEY, POST-COMPLETION OF CERTIFICATE/DEGREE

Q70. How easy or difficult is it for you to pay for college? / How easy or difficult was it for you to pay for college?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Easy (NET)	59	68	50	58	74
Very easy	30	34	19	27	40
Somewhat easy	30	35	32	31	34
Difficult (NET)	41	32	50	42	26
Somewhat difficult	21	25	16	30	15
Very difficult	19	6	33	12	12

Q68. How are you paying for college?/How did you pay for college?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
With money you earned or saved	29	26	14	48	33
With money from parents, relatives, friends, or a spouse/partner	14	21	16	28	15
Student loans that you have to pay back	62	55	58	28	49
Grants or scholarships that you do not have to pay back	30	52	39	53	38
With reimbursements or scholarships from your employer	10	17	4	14	25
Veteran's benefits or the GI Bill	10	14	15	2	5
Other sources	2	1	6	10	1

Q73. How much student loan debt will you have upon graduation from [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a]...?/How much student loan debt did you have when you graduated from [INSERT RESPONSE FROM S5a]...?

BASE: Asked if Q68 was 'Student loans that you have to pay back'

	For-profit alumni (N=155)	For-profit current students (N=130)	For-profit non-completers (N=53)	Current community college students (N=128)	Nonprofit online alumni (N=106)
More than you expected	54	44	48	34	49
Less than you expected	14	8	14	36	14
About as much as you expected	32	48	38	29	37
Don't know	-	*	-	1	-

Q73a. How easy or difficult is it for you to make the payments on your student loan debt?/ How easy or difficult will it be for you to make the payments on your student loan debt?

BASE: Asked if Q73 was 'More than you expected', 'Less than you expected' or 'About as much as you expected'

	For-profit alumni (N=155)	For-profit current students (N=129)	For-profit non-completers (N=53)	Current community college students (N=128)	Nonprofit online alumni (N=106)
Easy (NET)	36	44	22	45	56
Very easy	25	11	7	9	17
Somewhat easy	11	33	15	36	39
Difficult (NET)	63	43	78	53	43
Somewhat difficult	22	28	17	40	15
Very difficult	41	15	61	13	28
I already paid it all off	1	-	-	-	-
Don't know	-	13	-	2	-

Q76(T). Do you feel your school cares more about making money or more about the education of its students? / Do you feel your school cared more about making money or more about the education of its students?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Cares/Cared more about making money	53	33	30	38	31
Cares/Cared more about the education of its students	47	67	70	62	69

SECTION IX: PREPARATION FOR WORLD OF WORK, SCHOOL/PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Q75(T). Are you confident that completing your (certificate/degree) will greatly improve your job prospects, or are you worried that it will not pay off?

Before completing your (certificate/degree), were you confident that completing your (certificate/degree) would greatly improve your job prospects, or were you worried that it would not pay off?

Before enrolling at the school you most recently attended, were you confident that completing your (certificate/degree) would greatly improve your job prospects, or were you worried that it would not pay off?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Confident it will/would greatly improve job prospects	66	89	92	76	78
Worried that it will/would not pay off	34	11	8	24	22
Web blank	-	*	-	-	-

Q79(T). And if you compare all the costs of getting the (certificate/degree) to all the benefits, would you say that it was well worth it or that it really wasn't worth it, or that it remains to be seen?

BASE: All for-profit alumni and all nonprofit online alumni

	For-profit alumni	Nonprofit online alumni
Well worth it	38	57
Wasn't really worth it	37	23
Remains to be seen	25	20

SECTION X: RECRUITERS

Q83(T). Have you ever spoken to a college recruiter who promotes and markets a specific school?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Yes	24	40	33	35	18
No	76	60	67	65	82

Q86. Which of the following describes your experience with college recruiters?

BASE: Asked if Q83 was 'Yes'

	For-profit alumni (N=80)	For-profit current students (N=120)	For-profit non-completers (N=26)	Current community college students (N=153)	Nonprofit online alumni (N=61)
They pressured you to enroll before you felt ready	49	31	33	33	26
They contacted you too often	30	18	60	34	20
They helped you understand how to apply to college	39	34	50	43	36
They helped you understand how to apply for financial aid	43	42	13	27	34
They provided useful information about college	41	62	45	46	37
They lied to you or misled you	13	11	27	20	38

SECTION XI: IMPRESSIONS OF FOR-PROFIT SCHOOLS

Q89(T). In general, is your impression of for-profit colleges mostly positive, mostly negative, or neutral?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Mostly positive	24	39	14	26	22
Mostly negative	25	14	34	28	26
Neutral	51	46	52	46	52

Q89OE. Why do you have a [INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q89] impression of for-profit colleges?

Please email research@publicagenda.org to request open ended data.

Q89b. Would you recommend a for-profit college to a friend or family member?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Yes	52	73	23	52	57
No	48	27	77	47	43
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

SECTION XII: IMPRESSIONS OF ONLINE ONLY DEGREES

Q93(T). Compared with in-person college degree programs, do you think that employers look at online-only degrees more favorably, less favorably or are things about equal?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
More favorably	14	34	9	17	11
Less favorably	28	30	22	35	17
About equal	58	36	69	48	72

Q96(T). Compared to courses taught in-person, is it your sense students learn more in online-only courses, less, or are things about the same?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Students learn more	16	29	21	17	15
Students learn less	32	21	33	40	12
About the same	51	50	46	43	73
Web blank	1	-	-	-	-

Q97(T). Compared to in-person classes, is it your sense that online-only classes require...?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
More discipline	54	46	67	56	67
Less discipline	18	16	14	17	7
About the same amount of discipline	28	38	19	28	26

SECTION XIII: POLICY POSITIONS

Q103a. When a college has a lot of students who do not successfully complete their degrees or certificates, is that usually ...?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
The college's fault	22	18	12	23	6
The students' fault	22	16	25	21	26
Both the college's fault and the student's fault	56	66	63	57	68

Q82a. Would you say a **more expensive college** typically provides a **higher quality education**?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Yes	22	30	14	25	8
No	60	58	63	59	69
Don't know	18	11	23	16	23

Q82b. Would you say a **less expensive college** typically provides a **lower quality education**?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Yes	11	16	13	17	4
No	69	72	72	68	76
Don't know	20	12	15	16	20

Q101. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a. Too many students graduate from college with a lot of debt

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Agree (NET)	91	91	94	91	99
Strongly agree	69	64	83	66	86
Somewhat agree	21	27	11	25	13
Disagree (NET)	9	9	6	9	1
Somewhat disagree	7	7	6	9	1
Strongly disagree	2	2	1	*	*

b. Too many students who start college do not complete their degree or certificate

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Agree (NET)	77	86	88	86	88
Strongly agree	32	43	32	35	31
Somewhat agree	46	44	57	52	57
Disagree (NET)	23	14	12	14	12
Somewhat disagree	19	13	11	12	12
Strongly disagree	4	1	*	2	*

Q101. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Continued)

c. Too many students have difficulty transferring credits from one college to another

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Agree (NET)	71	77	75	75	71
Strongly agree	13	34	13	27	24
Somewhat agree	58	44	62	48	47
Disagree (NET)	29	23	25	25	29
Somewhat disagree	24	19	20	23	25
Strongly disagree	5	4	5	2	4

d. Recruiters push students too hard to enroll in college

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Agree (NET)	77	74	78	70	75
Strongly agree	42	35	38	34	40
Somewhat agree	35	40	40	37	35
Disagree (NET)	23	26	22	29	25
Somewhat disagree	19	21	19	24	17
Strongly disagree	4	5	3	5	8
Web blank	-	-	-	1	-

e. Not enough students can find good jobs after graduating from college

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Agree (NET)	85	78	80	86	90
Strongly agree	42	41	35	39	49
Somewhat agree	43	37	46	47	41
Disagree (NET)	15	22	20	14	10
Somewhat disagree	14	17	17	12	8
Strongly disagree	1	5	3	3	2

Q101. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (*Continued*)

f. Too many employers demand a college degree for jobs that shouldn't really require one

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Agree (NET)	83	78	82	91	81
Strongly agree	49	46	32	47	46
Somewhat agree	33	32	50	43	36
Disagree (NET)	17	22	18	9	19
Somewhat disagree	14	16	8	9	17
Strongly disagree	3	6	10	1	2

g. Everyone who graduates from high school should try to go to college

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Agree (NET)	48	70	45	58	44
Strongly agree	12	39	11	25	19
Somewhat agree	35	31	34	33	25
Disagree (NET)	52	30	55	42	56
Somewhat disagree	36	22	31	28	38
Strongly disagree	17	8	24	14	18

Q102. If a college has a track record of too many students **graduating with a lot of debt**, which of the following do you think should happen?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Withhold federal financial aid dollars to discourage students from attending the college	11	12	12	10	12
Close the college	4	4	1	7	6
Take away the college's accreditation	7	5	10	9	3
The college should get additional government oversight	25	31	29	29	24
Require the college to make a plan to improve	42	40	55	50	56
Forgive students' debt from the college	45	52	63	41	37
Require the college to publicly report the average amount of debt students graduate with	36	38	50	47	42
Require the college to provide students with comprehensive financial counseling	40	50	52	59	52
Something else	5	1	6	7	4
Nothing should happen	5	3	2	4	6

Q103. If a college has a track record of too many students **starting but not completing their degree or certificate**, which of the following do you think should happen?

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Withhold federal financial aid dollars to discourage students from attending the college	8	8	1	12	21
Close the college	10	9	1	5	7
Take away the college's accreditation	13	9	11	12	9
The college should get additional government oversight	21	31	29	23	17
Require the college to make a plan to improve	51	57	55	49	54
Forgive students' debt from the college	29	26	36	31	17
Require the college to publicly report how many students do not complete their degree or certificate	40	30	41	40	38
Require the college to provide students with comprehensive academic advising	44	57	56	57	50
Something else	6	1	10	11	3
Nothing should happen	8	1	16	6	7

Q104. If a college has a track record of too many students **not finding good jobs after graduating**, which of the following do you think should happen? Please select all that apply.

	For-profit alumni	For-profit current students	For-profit non-completers	Current community college students	Nonprofit online alumni
Withhold federal financial aid dollars to discourage students from attending the college	10	10	4	10	18
Close the college	6	4	1	4	5
Take away the college's accreditation	12	10	8	19	8
The college should get additional government oversight	15	16	16	24	10
Require the college to make a plan to improve	51	49	55	53	53
Forgive students' debt from the college	30	24	44	29	22
Require the college to publicly report how many graduates find good jobs	40	40	46	47	38
Require the college to provide students with comprehensive career counseling	50	58	64	53	49
Something else	6	2	10	9	9
Nothing should happen	9	5	15	6	8