The Cost Of Catching Up In Alabama

By Laura Jimenez and Maggie Thompson

September 2016

Remedial education is costly. Nationally, students in remediation spend approximately $1.3 billion in yearly out-of-pocket costs on remedial courses that build basic skills in reading and math but do not count toward a degree, dramatically contributing to their overall student debt load.¹ A better K-12 education would do much to address this issue.

Why Alabamians Should Be Concerned

Taking remedial courses extends the time and costs of obtaining a degree or certificate while reducing the likelihood of completion. This has a significant social and financial impact on students.

• Students in Alabama spend a combined $26,624,000 out of pocket on remedial courses.²
• 41 percent of incoming students in Alabama had to take one or more remedial courses.³

Nationally, the cost of remediation adds up. According to a report by Complete College America, the average total cost of an additional year of college for a two-year associate’s degree nationally is $50,933 in cost of attendance and lost wages.⁴ An extra year for a four-year bachelor’s degree costs students an average of $68,153 in cost of attendance and lost wages.⁵ Nationally, fewer than 50 percent of students complete their remedial programs and even less graduate with a degree or certificate.⁶

Increasing access to a college education must mean more than just increasing enrollment rates. To ensure that students stay in college and complete a degree, we must ensure that students have the skills they need to succeed.

End Notes

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.