The Cost Of Catching Up In California

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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. A better K-12 education would do much to address this issue.

Why Californians 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 California spend a combined $205,488,000 out of pocket on remedial courses.

• 47 percent of incoming students in California had to take one or more remedial courses.

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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. An extra year for a four-year bachelor’s degree costs students an average of $68,153 in cost of attendance and lost wages. Nationally, fewer than 50 percent of students complete their remedial programs and even less graduate with a degree or certificate.

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.