

MAKING THE CASE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: THE GUARDIAN'S INITIATIVE



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The Guardians Initiative: Reclaiming the Public Trust™

Kentucky CPE Symposium

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Initiative™
Reclaiming the Public Trust

AGB ASSOCIATION OF
GOVERNING BOARDS
OF UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

We've got work to do.

"The One Question Most Americans Get Wrong About College Graduates"
New York Times, June 3, 2016

What is the unemployment rate for 25-34 year-olds who graduated from a four-year college?

(Hint: for those with only a high school degree, it's 7.4%.)

- *NYT* readers' average: 9.2%
- Google survey average answer: 6.5%
- Correct answer: _____

- **61% of Americans** say the higher education system in the United States is going in the **wrong direction** (Pew Research, 2018):
- Moody's Investors Service changed the outlook for higher education from **stable to negative**, citing stagnant state and research funding and **uncertainty at the federal level** as factors increasing the volatility of the sector. (2017)
- According to a 2015 Gallup/*Atlantic* survey, just 38% of people who graduated between 2006 and 2015 said they felt strongly that **their education was worth the price tag**.

Headlines from 2018 and 2019

“Graduates spent nearly \$7.5 billion on education that failed to deliver”

Marketwatch

“There seems to be no end to the rise in student loan debt” *The Washington*

Post

“Student loans are starting to bite the economy” *Bloomberg*

“Hiring is on the rise, but are college grads prepared for the world of work?”

Forbes

“The workforce is calling, higher education will you answer?--*Forbes*

“Persistent partisan breakdown on higher ed” *Inside Higher Education*

PUBLIC CRITICISM/PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

The tone of public criticism has sharpened recently, but the public's understanding of higher education's contributions and challenges is often lacking.

“On virtually every measure of economic well-being and career attainment—from personal earnings to job satisfaction to the share employed full time—young college graduates are outperforming their peers with less education.” *Pew Research Center, 2014*

The Public Trust: Things to Consider

- Reports of declining confidence in higher education institutions ***should be read in context***—in 2017, confidence in higher education compared with other institutions was ***higher than in all but three***: the military, small businesses, and the police. (Gallup, 2017)
- ***Terminology matters***—Gallup released a poll in February 2018 noting that 36% of Americans have great a deal of confidence in "higher education" while only 23% have a great deal of confidence in "colleges and universities."
- Polling results aren't all negative—a November 2017 poll by Civis Analytics found the vast majority of Americans (86%) still feel that a ***higher education enhances job prospects***, and 89% believe it's important to pursue education past high school.

Return on Investment (ROI)

- “ROI is the ***ultimate gauge of value***. Public confidence in, and support for, colleges and universities depends on the public’s understanding of the ROI those institutions generate for students and society at large.”
- ***Definition of ROI:*** sum of all economic and noneconomic net benefits for the student and society, measured against investment by the student, government, and other contributors.
- Increased college enrollment in recent decades is tied to a broadly held belief that ***college adds major value***.
- ***Measuring ROI*** is often based on comparisons of those with a college degree and those with a high school education.
- In 2015, ***median earnings for college graduates*** aged 25-34 were 70% higher than the median for high school graduates; median for associate degree holders were 20% higher than those with some college but no degree.

From AGB’s Guardians Initiative

Return on Investment (ROI)

The public benefits of college education overlap the benefits to the students. “...quantifiable benefits of college education are not only financial, and the ***student is not the only beneficiary.***”

For example: College graduates

- ***earn more income and pay more taxes which fund services for everyone.***
- ***are in better health; healthier citizens are more productive and reduce burdens on insurance, unreimbursed medical expenses and other costs to taxpayers.***
- ***are upwardly mobile.***
- ***are less likely to rely on public assistance.***
- ***are more likely to be civically engaged and serve as community leaders.***

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Return on Investment (ROI)

“Powerful evidence today shows that college provides a robust positive return on public and individual investment. The payoff for students and the public accrues most dramatically when students earn college degrees.”

“College fosters lifelong productive habits of mind and capacities to flourish. These benefits inure to the public. Too, higher education institutions are major employers, conduct path-breaking research, and support and populate arts and other organizations that enrich community life.”

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What's the Problem?

The public's perceptions about the value of higher education are not aligned with the evidence about a positive return on investments for those with college degrees.

According to research by the Public Agenda, Americans were substantially less likely to agree that college is necessary in 2016 than they were a decade prior.

“The fact is, even if higher education has a story to tell about the continued value of a college degree, many people are not hearing it.”

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Higher Education Has a Political Problem (According to Institution Leaders)

Survey Question	% Agree	% Disagree
Higher education is being dangerously attacked	97%	3%
Higher education has created its own public support problem	85%	15%
Colleges & universities have not been effective political advocates for themselves	88%	12%
Better collective action is required for the voice of higher education to be heard with influence	94%	6%

Real-time poll of Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute attendees

How should we respond?

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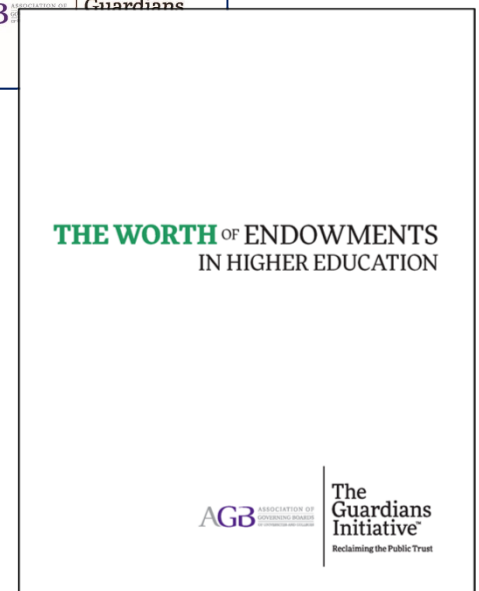
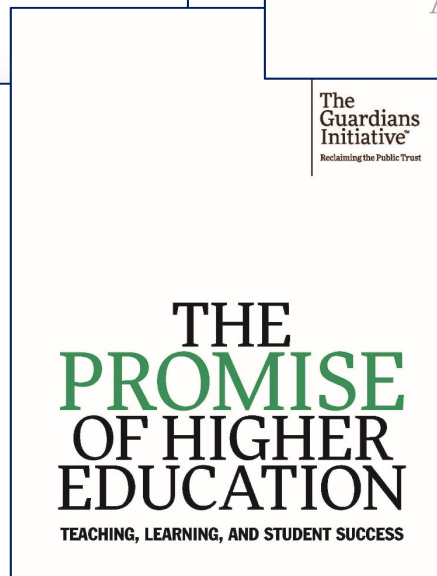
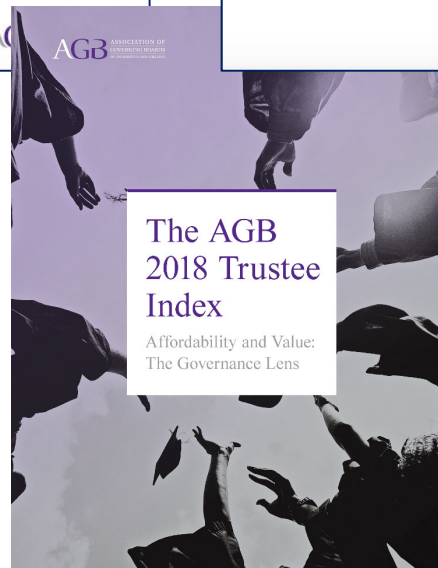
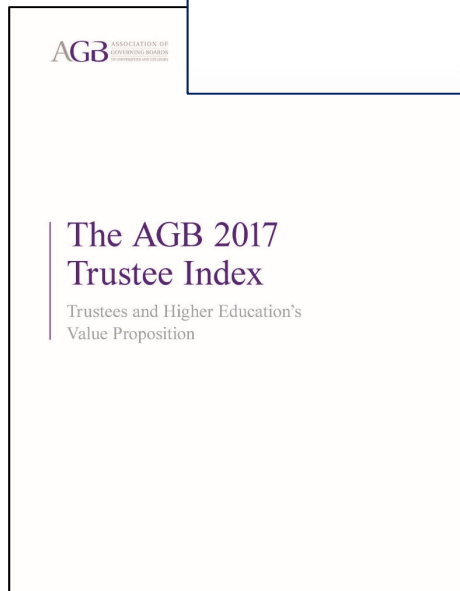
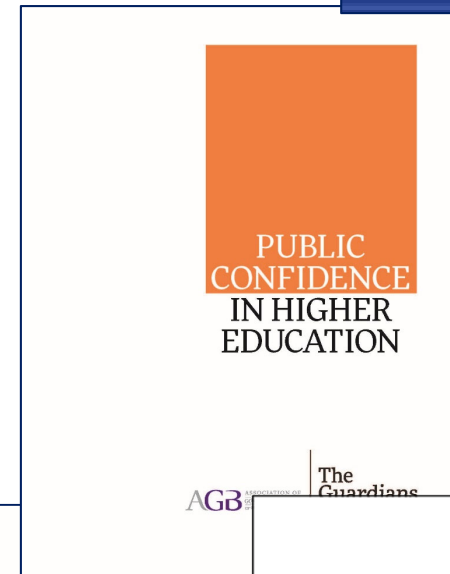
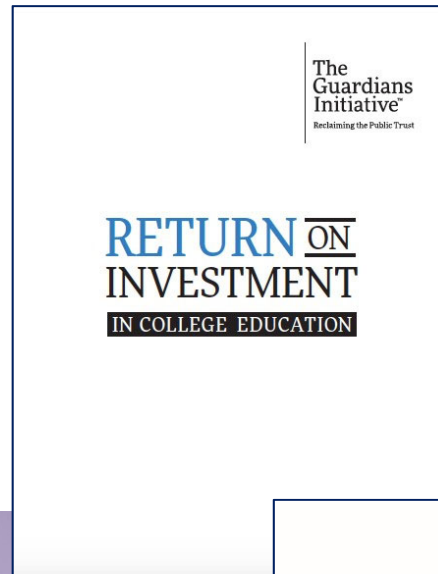
Now is the time for trustees to see themselves both as *fiduciaries of their institutions* and *advocates for higher education's values and contributions*.

- 50,000 informed, objective, influential citizens
- Engage them to help reverse the negative narrative

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Our Tools

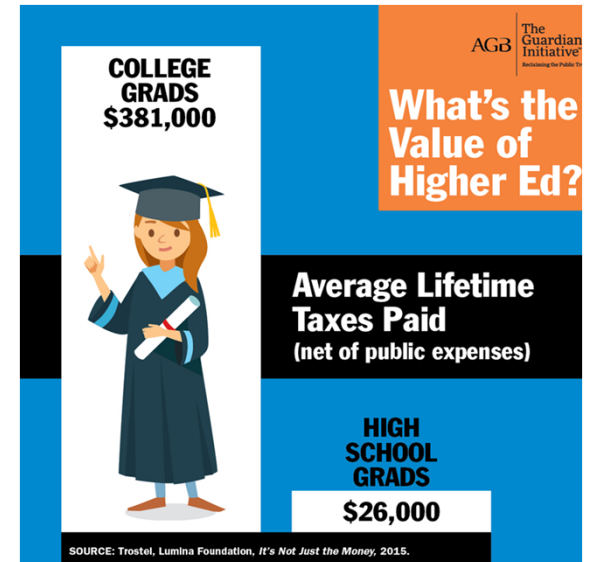
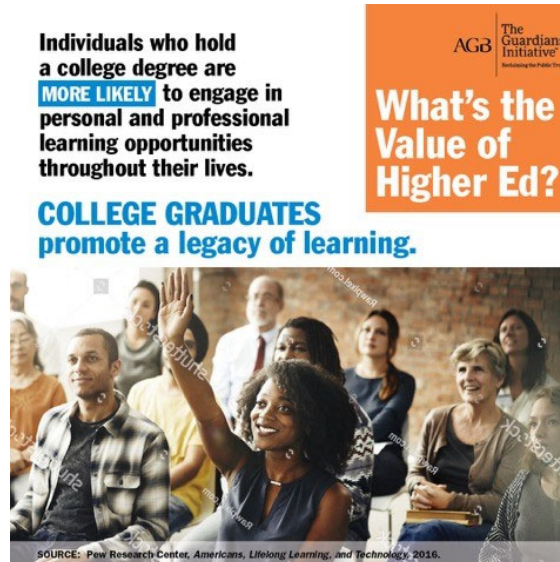
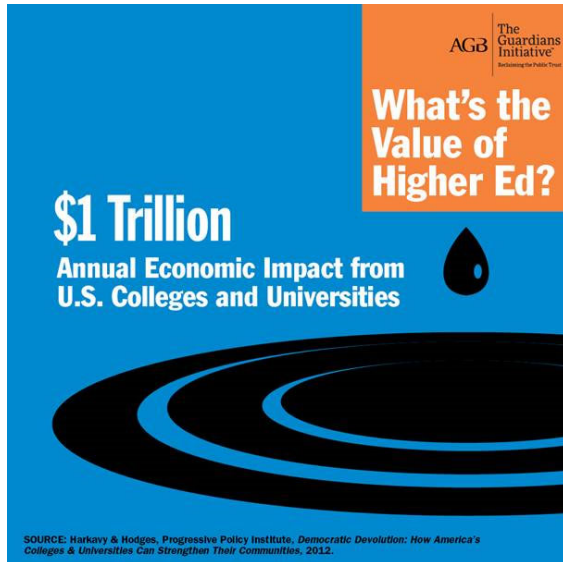
Resources to inform and equip trustees as advocates:



What's the Value of Higher Ed?



Resources to assist institutions and trustees as they engage with their communities through speeches, campus events, and media outreach



Highlighting trustee advocacy via social media @AGBGuardians

Our Goals

- Increase the number of stories and opinion pieces related to the value of higher education
- Improve data regarding the perception of higher education in public opinion polling
- Increase investment and collaboration between higher education and policymakers, particularly at the state level

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Reclaiming the Public Trust

Guardians in Action: Op-Eds

“Americans are losing faith in higher education. Here’s one way to restore it.” – Dennis FitzSimons, trustee of Northwestern University, in the *Chicago Tribune*

“A degree is still a great investment, and the value of college just goes up from there” – Richard W. Riley, trustee of Furman University, for the *South Carolina State*

“Higher ed vital in ever-changing economy” – Deborah P. Majoras, trustee of Westminster College, in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*

“Regents to Legislature: Remove threat to higher education” – Robert W. Levy, Chair of the Louisiana Board of Regents, in the *Daily Advertiser*

Guardians in Action: Engaged Institutions

- University of Wisconsin System
- Oregon State University Foundation
- University System of Maryland
- University of Louisiana System
- Ramapo College of New Jersey
- University of New Mexico
- Texas State University
- Utah System of Higher Education
- Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees

Guardians in Action: Engaged Institutions

Philadelphia: A Guardians City

A Partnership of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia and Widener University

Review at www.agb.org/Guardians

GETTING INVOLVED WITH GUARDIANS



ENGAGE

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www.agb.org/guardians



USE

Toolkit resources to inform your
advocacy for higher education.



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