

State University Report Card

Selectivity

A

Education Quality

A

Cost

C

Employment

A

Influence

A

Environment

B

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be

recent explosion

in the number of college report cards, rating and ranking initiatives. Examples include those supported by the White House, student activists, for-profit companies, non-profit foundations, college associations, and even social media enterprises such as LinkedIn. Values driving these grading/rating schemes have a mix of commercial and public accountability

P C K F D A U J V O F B D D U P C S O U F I D Q S S Q B T P W T F S S J E J O H
concern about what drives college cost (expenses) and the price students pay. is principal concern diminishes rather than adds to their usefulness for many students and families, especially first-generation, poor and underserved populations.

Our research indicates that more than price concerns,

Flawed Assumptions on Need, Audience, Comparability and Outcomes

Report card providers explicitly state or imply that there is too little information and a lack of transparency about college cost and price. They assume that more comparative cost information will lead to more enlightened consumer choices, better decisions on where to attend college, and about how much to pay, leading to better outcomes and less personal debt. But as a recent Brookings study regarding transparency in calculating college costs points out, while cost calculators are “well intended, they have had limited success and may even make matters worse.”

Some providers state or

problem solving), and preparation for jobs and careers that lead to a more prosperous life.

how we pay for it, and the expected outcomes that benefit the individual and society—seems to be the right step in helping students choose and succeed in college.

Suggestions for Moving Forward

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These generalizations cannot be applied equally to each report card website that HESIG reviewed. Certainly, many provide useful information and will continue to improve, and new developers will enter the field, given the importance of college access and affordability. HESIG's analysis suggests that it is time to shift some of the focus from the affordability/debt challenge to shed light on the more elusive matter of college value, a proposition that brings together the economic reality of paying for college with important matters of quality and outcomes from

College in America is highly valued. Citizens are willing to pay for what they value, but they expect colleges to be accountable about access, affordability, completion and outcomes. Placing more emphasis on the college value proposition as we tackle the big questions—who goes to college,