

Busting the Myth that Affordable Higher Education Is an Impossible Dream

By President Robert Brown, Esq., President, UWLA

We all know untenable student loan debt has been commanding the news since the last election cycle. Politicians are driven by the reality that an astounding percentage of Americans feel access to quality affordable higher education is simply out of reach.

According to a recently released national survey by the [2022 Lumina-Gallup State of Higher Education Study](#) ¹(Gallup Blog, May 4, 2022), fewer than 10 percent of non-college Americans believe that quality, affordable higher education is available to those who want it.

A similar nine percent of young people – whether enrolled in community colleges or post-secondary institutions – also feel that quality, affordable higher education is readily available to those who want it. The percentage remains the same with those who are not currently enrolled in such programs. What this shows is that the affordability of higher education is not just experiencing a perception problem but is in the midst of a full-blown crisis of confidence.

The same study found that nearly 60 percent of students currently enrolled in college feel that a two-year or four-year degree is more important for their careers than it was 20 years ago, while 30 percent believe it holds the same value as it did in the past. For those not enrolled in school, more than three-quarters believe attaining a higher education degree is *as important* or *more important* than ever. Clearly, the value of higher education has not diminished in the minds of American students, as well as non-students.

So, given how vital education and attaining a degree are to the success and prosperity of Americans, what are universities and colleges doing to make access and affordability a priority? From the looks of it, not much.

“According to the researchers’ [analysis](#) ² of U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics and National Center for Education Statistics data for the years 1980 to 2019, college costs have increased by 169 percent over the past four decades — while earnings for workers between the ages of 22 and 27 have increased by just 19 percent.”(CNBC, Nov. 2, 2021, Abigail Hess)

Simply put, leading educational institutions are often out of reach due to the high costs. In fact, a timely article in the [Los Angeles Times](#) on May 9, 2022 reports³, “Most Californians believe the University of California and California State University are unaffordable, and they highly value community colleges and vocational training as alternative paths to career success, according to a [statewide poll released Monday](#).”⁴

¹ <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/392366/few-say-quality-affordable-higher-widely-available.aspx>

² <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/02/the-gap-in-college-costs-and-earnings-for-young-workers-since-1980.html>

³ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-09/californians-say-uc-and-csu-tuition-is-unaffordable-despite-financial-aid>

⁴ <https://www.strategies360.com/landing/californiapolling/>

Delivering Affordable Higher Education is Feasible

Delivering affordable higher education is not only feasible, it's available today. At UWLA, our vision is "democratization of education," and our mission is to make quality higher and post-graduate education affordable and accessible to those who might not otherwise have the opportunity -- especially those who must work full-time and study part-time.

As president of UWLA I am working to bring this reality to our diverse student base in many ways.

First, we formed a for-profit organization that runs the business of education for UWLA. As such, we work continuously to keep our overhead down. We don't invest in designer buildings or big-name faculty chairs. We don't have sports teams, nor the expensive facilities and salaries to support them.

We focus on practical, outcome-oriented education, which is taught by esteemed faculty who are also practitioners in their field. With a student body that includes many working students, we make sure that the education provided at UWLA is more than theoretical, it's useful.

As I often say, our UWLA students can use what they learn on Thursday at their work on Monday.

So, what have we created? With the hard work of dedicated administrators, an exceptional professional staff, and outstanding faculty members, we are delivering a streamlined, high-touch learning experience that rivals institutions many times our size and cost.

We know what our strengths are as an educational institution, and we focus on those things that are most meaningful to our students. That means not adding a lot of extraneous studies or programs. Our students come to pursue degree completion of a Bachelor of Science in business administration, or they're coming back to school for a post-secondary JD degree to become a lawyer, or to secure a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership and Business Innovation, to advance or catalyze their career in business.

Are our programs affordable? I challenge anyone to compare our costs against a comparable education. I believe we'll show we're significantly less, even before factoring in Federal Financial Aid, which we can help with, too. UWLA is proof positive that the myth of affordable higher education is busted. And the continuing success of our graduates is proof that our approach is making a real and impactful difference in the lives of so many who wish to better themselves personally and professionally.

Since 1966, UWLA has been privileged to help launch or enhance the careers of thousands of its graduates.