COVID-19 is Disrupting Students’ Confidence in the Value of Higher Education

Over the past five years, after hearing from more than 350,000 Americans through our Strada-Gallup research, we know that beliefs about the value of education and training after high school are closely tied to connections to work. In this unusual semester, what is happening to these connections, and how are these changes shaping opinions about value?

Our Student Viewpoint survey, with more than 4,000 responses from undergraduates now enrolled at bachelor’s degree-granting schools, finds that beyond the disruptions to in-person learning, COVID-19 is challenging essential drivers of student and alumni beliefs about the long-term value of their education. Understanding these real-time dynamics can help faculty, higher ed leaders, and administrators support students’ needs and reduce the frictions they are experiencing.

1 in 3 college students say their school is “excellent” or “very good” at connecting education to meaningful careers.

1 in 5 college students say COVID-19 has made their opportunities for career exploration “much worse.”

Fewer than 1 in 5 current college students strongly agree their education will be worth the cost.

When students have the support to connect their education to a career, they are more likely to say their education will be worth the cost.

Survey fielded by College Pulse from Sept. 10 to 25 as an online survey from a nationally representative panel of students currently enrolled at bachelor’s degree-granting institutions.