



## Study Contends Hillary Clinton's Free College Plan Will Hurt Private Colleges

**Conservatives say study shows Clinton's plan will not work, while others defend the proposal**

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Private colleges would be negatively impacted if Hillary Clinton's campaign pledge to eliminate public college and university tuition for in-state students with family incomes below \$125,000 comes to pass.

So says a study compiled by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

The study authors estimated a median projected increase of enrollment at public colleges and universities of 16%, with a corresponding decline of enrollment in public institutions of 11%.

"Outside that most prestigious cluster, many private institutions would likely be forced to become more elitist and less diverse as their dependence on students that could pay full tuition becomes even greater as price-sensitive students shift to public competitors," the authors wrote.

Keep in mind that it's an election year, but conservative organizations said the report showed the plan was faulty.

"It would likely kill many private colleges that can't compete against 'free,' while increasing separation between elite schools and everyone else," Neal McCluskey, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, told Diverse.

Terry Hartle, a senior vice president at the American Council on Education (ACE), said less and non-selective private colleges would absorb most of that impact. Many of those institutions already are financially troubled and have difficulty maintaining enrollment, he told Inside Higher Ed.

Meantime, George Leer, director of research at the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, said the Clinton plan might draw the wrong kinds of students.

"Unfortunately, those are precisely the young people who should most be considering less costly and more effective alternatives after completing high school," Leef told Diverse. "They are mostly students with weak academic preparation and little interest in real college-level studies. They want and need some training that will put them on a path for a good career, but for most of them college is not the best way to go."

Aside from touching upon changes in enrollment patterns, the Georgetown report noted that the Clinton plan wouldn't necessarily improve overall equity, as private colleges would replace the students they lose to public schools with more students paying full tuition, many of whom would be white.

But Demos analyst Mark Huelsman told Inside Higher Ed via email that the plan would pull more working-class students into higher education and "make the ranks of collegegoers much more representative of the U.S. population as a whole."

Huelsman also noted that Clinton's plan would implement a \$25 billion annual fund for minority-serving institutions, as well as those private schools that educate underrepresented students.