

News from the System

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Higher Education Leads to a Better Mississippi

What does higher education mean to Mississippi? Simply put, it means betterment for the state. The more graduates our universities can produce, the more the state will benefit economically, socially, and culturally.

Higher education leads to increased tax revenues.

University graduates earn on average \$1 million more in a lifetime than someone with a high school diploma and approximately \$17,000 more a year than a person with *some* college. Higher wages mean more taxable income.

Higher education leads to a larger, more qualified, and more flexible workforce.

According to U.S. Department of Labor data, by 2020 there will be 12 million more skilled jobs - those requiring a college education - than people qualified to fill them. In the next decade, 70 percent of the nation's top 30 fastest-growing jobs will require a postsecondary education. Higher education can help Mississippi meet the future demands of employers. In addition, as the American workforce becomes more specialized and lower-skilled jobs are sent overseas, a person with a university degree can more easily adapt and find other employment without the need for costly retraining.

Higher education leads to lower levels of unemployment and decreased reliance on social programs.

While 5.5 percent of high school graduates and 5.2 percent of people with some college are unemployed, only 3.3 percent of university graduates are unemployed. Mississippi spends about \$540 million on social programs each year. With more higher education and less unemployment, fewer Mississippians will rely on welfare and social services, thus allowing the state to spend these dollars in other, more productive ways.

Higher education leads to reduced crime rates.

Approximately 75 percent of Mississippians sentenced to a prison term for the first time attended no college. Half did not graduate from high school.

The state can pay for *two* people to go to a state university and receive a quality education for the same price as housing *one* person in a Mississippi prison.

Higher education leads to social cohesion.

Data show that individuals who attend college have an increased appreciation of diversity. Heightened levels of appreciation and tolerance for diversity of all kinds lead to an improved quality of life for all Mississippians.

Higher education leads to increased civic engagement.

University graduates are more likely than high school graduates to both vote and volunteer. In the 2004 Presidential election, only 52 percent of people with a high school diploma voted, compared to 72 percent of people with a university degree. Likewise, in Mississippi in 2004, only 7.9 percent of those with a high school diploma participated in volunteer opportunities, compared to 23.5 percent of those with a university degree. Mississippi benefits socially and culturally from having more engaged citizens.