



## *Higher Education & COVID-19: The Future of Learning, Opportunity and Work*

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified many challenges in higher education including the need to expand college access, reduce the reliance on in-person instruction, and ensure that adult learners are positioned to succeed. In order to effectively respond to the challenges resulting from the pandemic, along with the needs of the U.S. workforce in the years to come, a reorganization of existing federal college funding programs will be critical. If the federal government does not simultaneously address both the short-term needs of students affected by the pandemic along with the structural challenges plaguing higher education, gaps in the labor market will continue to grow and ultimately hinder the economic recovery.

### POLICY PROPOSAL

#### *Building Tomorrow's Workforce Today: Twin Proposals for the Future of Learning, Opportunity and Work*

*Richard Arum (UC Irvine) and Mitchell Stevens (Stanford)*

The COVID-19 pandemic has surfaced pressing and interrelated workforce challenges: the need to expand higher education access, respond to the rapidly changing training needs of adult learners, and disrupt the sector's reliance on in-person instruction. Neither federal-government college funding programs nor traditional colleges and universities are currently organized to serve the future needs of the US workforce, let alone respond to the acute learning needs brought about by the pandemic. Compounding these challenges, the nation is without a comprehensive data infrastructure that would enable the systematic accumulation of information and science on the relative value of various learning delivery modalities and instructional programs. This proposal recommends federal support for online educational credits to all U.S. adults and the establishment of a National Institute for the Future of Learning, Opportunity and Work.

### ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

#### *Major Decisions: What Graduates Earn Over Their Lifetimes*

*Kristen Broady (The Hamilton Project) and Brad Hershbein (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research)*

In this update of a 2014 Hamilton Project analysis, the authors examine earnings for approximately 80 majors, focusing on both annual earnings for each year of the career and cumulative lifetime earnings.

To accompany the economic analysis, The Hamilton Project will also release two interactives: Career Earnings by College Major and a Student Debt Calculator. In the first interactive, people can see what they would earn across different majors throughout a lifetime. In the second interactive, users can visualize the student debt repayment scenarios people would face by accounting for the amount of debt and the expected earnings based on their major.