An Issue Map for College Value

Starting question “Is College Worth It?”

Negatives:
- Information about college cost, including the fact that not all colleges cost the same or offer the same amount of financial aid. (Stephens mentions cost, Nemko recommends shopping around. None of our sources include much specific information.)
- Complaints and evidence about college rigor, curriculum, quality of teaching, and results (Stephens, Nemko, Riley; Perry disagrees but does not provide evidence)

Positives
- Stats about the unemployment rates and salary of people with various educational levels (Le mentions, Smith gives stats, Census Bureau and “Is a College Degree Worth the Money” give more specifics). These suggest an economic payoff of getting a college degree, but Nemko calls that into question, and the Census Bureau information shows that the payoff is not the same for everyone but varies with gender and race/ethnicity.
- Non-economic benefits to the individual and community (Smith, Le, Perry)
- Projections of the need for college-educated people as the economy continues to change (Perry)

Alternatives exist, though college is necessary for some jobs (Stephens, Nemko, Riley)

Alternative question: Should everyone go to college?
- Not everyone is interested in what is taught in college, or will put in the effort needed to benefit (Nemko)
- Not everyone is capable of succeeding. (Nemko gives stats on success rate for those in lower 40% of class. ACT has data on correlation with ACT scores).
  - But could some of these people succeed if given more support? (Perry, Miller)
- Different demographic groups see different levels of financial benefit from a degree (Census Bureau)
- Some jobs require a college degree, but many don’t (Stephens, Nemko)

This question can be addressed at the individual level (should I go to college and where, depending on goals), or one could propose changes in public policies (financial aid, for example, or encouraging alternatives) or changes in colleges’ or employers’ practices.