College Isn't For All

We oversold the degree



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We've built an education system that pushes nearly every student toward college—and then act surprised when millions graduate into the wrong jobs, or don't graduate at all.

That's not a student failure.

It's a system failure.

America's education system is not broken in the way people often claim. It still produces world-class universities, elite researchers, and top-tier

professionals.

But that’s not the real test.

The real test is whether it prepares the **entire workforce**—not just the top tier—to succeed in a modern economy.

By that measure, the system is falling short.

We have built an education model that assumes a single path to success. For decades, students have been told: *go to college, or you will fall behind.*

That message made sense in a different economy. It no longer does.

A System Designed for the Wrong Outcome

Today, we face a basic contradiction:

Millions of students leave college with degrees that don’t lead to stable careers

Employers struggle to fill high-paying technical and skilled positions

We have too many graduates with the wrong preparation—and not enough workers with the right skills.

That is not a market failure.

It is a design failure.

What We Can Learn from Germany

If we want to fix the system, we don’t need to invent something new—we need to recognize what already works.

Germany’s dual-track education system offers a clear alternative. Students are not forced into a one-size-fits-all path. Instead, they are given structured options:

A traditional academic route leading to university

A vocational track combining classroom learning with paid, hands-on training

Both paths are respected. Both lead to stable careers.

The result is a workforce aligned with the needs of the economy—engineers, technicians, and skilled tradespeople developed through intentional design, not chance.

The lesson is simple:

Different students need different paths—and those paths must be equally valued.

The Cultural Problem We Don’t Talk About

One of the biggest failures in American education isn’t academic—it’s cultural.

We’ve quietly turned vocational careers into second-class options.

High schools emphasize college placement. Guidance counselors steer students toward universities. Parents and students equate success with a four-year degree.

Meanwhile, the economy tells a very different story.

Electricians, machinists, HVAC technicians, and construction professionals are in high demand—and often earn as much as, or more than, many college graduates.

Yet we continue to steer students away from these careers.

That disconnect isn't just inefficient.

It's unsustainable.

Start Earlier or Keep Falling Behind

By the time students reach high school, many outcomes are already determined.

If we are serious about improving education, we have to start earlier.

High-quality early childhood education consistently leads to:

- stronger academic performance
- lower dropout rates
- better long-term workforce outcomes

This isn't just social policy.

It's economic strategy.

Teacher Quality Is the Foundation

No reform will succeed without addressing the quality of teaching.

Teachers are the single most important factor in student outcomes, yet the profession faces growing challenges:

- declining interest among top graduates
- compensation that lags comparable careers
- increasing administrative burden

If we want better outcomes, we have to treat teaching as a high-value profession.

That means:

- competitive compensation
- stronger training
- clear performance expectations

A system cannot outperform the quality of its teachers.

Coordination Without Control

Education in the United States is decentralized—and that has real advantages.

But it also creates fragmentation. Standards vary widely. Outcomes vary even more. Best practices are not consistently shared or scaled.

One solution is the creation of a **National Education Council (NEC)**—not as a controlling authority, but as a coordinating body.

Its role would be simple:

- identify what works
- promote best practices
- align education with workforce needs

This isn't about federal control.

It's about coherence.

Education Is Economic Policy

At its core, education policy is economic policy.

A modern economy requires:

- technical skills
- adaptability
- continuous learning

Yet our system still treats education as something that ends at graduation.

That no longer works.

We need a model that integrates:

- classroom learning
- apprenticeships
- ongoing skill development

Education should not be a one-time event.

It should be a **lifecycle system tied directly to the workforce.**

A Bridge Between School and Work

One underutilized idea is national service.

A structured service option—civilian or military—can provide:

- discipline and responsibility
- practical skills
- real-world experience

It can also give students time to develop direction before committing to a career path.

This isn’t about mandates.

It’s about creating a bridge between education and adulthood.

Fix the Structure, Not the Students

It’s easy to blame individuals—students, teachers, or schools.

But outcomes reflect the system they operate within.

Right now, that system produces a consistent mismatch between education and employment.

That’s not coincidence.

That’s design.

If we want a stronger economy, we need a better-aligned education system:

- multiple respected pathways
- earlier investment in learning
- stronger teaching foundations
- real alignment with workforce needs

These aren’t radical ideas.

They’re practical ones.

The Bottom Line

We don’t have a talent problem.

We have an alignment problem.

And until we fix the structure, we will keep producing the same results—no matter how much money we spend or how many reforms we attempt.

Not every student needs the same path—but every path should lead to opportunity

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