

## 2023 RNL Report Overcoming Financing Fears

Speaker 1 ([00:00:04](#)):

Good afternoon, everyone. This is Matt Osborne with Ardeo. And we're thrilled that you're joining us today for this webinar. Got some great people here joining me, and we're going to be introducing ourselves in a minute. But I have a few housekeeping items that I want to cover. You know, as part of the conversation today, we do want to be a conversation, but we also recognize the limitations of the webinar format. So if you have a question, we'd love you to use the question box in the dialogue bar at the side of your screen. Submit those, we'll address those at the end. So please, you know, as you have them, send those on our way. We'd appreciate that. As you also already heard some we're recording this. So some of you are recording and listening to this recording, I should say may be wondering about getting your questions answered.

([00:00:52](#)):

And you, you'll, we'll give you an opportunity at the end and explain how you can submit a question that we can follow up with at a later time. And then lastly, of course, we want to assure everyone that you will get a copy of this recording after the webinar. So for those of you that had pad and paper or your iPad ready to take notes copious notes, please know that at least the, the webinar will be provided for you. But let's get started. You know, my name's Matt Osborne. I'm Senior Vice President at Ardeo. Been here for 10 years prior to that, 30 years in higher ed, and was actually the very first client of Ardeo. So thrilled to be here with you today. But as you know, we're featuring a lot of research from RNL. And so, Raquel, please introduce yourself.

Speaker 2 ([00:01:44](#)):

Hi everyone, I am Raquel Bermejo. I am the Associate Vice President for market research for RNL for the undergraduate enrollment management division. I've been with RNL for 15 years, literally. I think I had my anniversary about a week ago. And I think this topic, I think the topic of family engagement it's possibly my favorite topic to research and to talk about. So I'm very excited to be here today.

Speaker 1 ([00:02:20](#)):

Thanks, Raquel and Jonathan?

Speaker 3 ([00:02:23](#)):

Yeah Jonathan Shores. I am the Executive Vice President at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky. I started my 27th year in higher education spent, just joined the Cumberlands not quite a year ago, back in January or February, I guess. And so I'm kind of a new kid on the block as it is at the University of Cumberlands, and spent 17 years working at a couple different institutions in North Carolina, 10 years on the vendor side, actually at AR working, had the privilege of working with Matt. And now I get to be on the webinar with these two fabulous people, and I'm, I'm excited.

Speaker 1 ([00:03:04](#)):

Well, so those are our introductions, but let's get to the data and the research findings, because at the end of the day we know that this information can help you help families. And we are, we're just excited to be able to share it with you. You see the agenda that we have. Raquel take it away.

Speaker 2 ([00:03:22](#)):

Thank you very much. You're going to get a QR code at the end of the webinar so you can download this report. This report is brought, and it goes very deep. What the three of us are going to do today here is

just talk about just one section of the report as it relates to communication with families about financing topics. We've divided this presentation in four sections. First, we'll be talking about communication preferences. Next, we'll talk about information topics, what families want to know and what they have access to financing, perceptions and plans. And finally, we'll end with overcoming fears best practices to communicate with families. So the data that we're going to use today comes from a study that ended a couple of months ago. And it had 12,000 responses from respective families, so families with the students in 10th, 11th, and 12th grade.

[\(00:04:36\):](#)

And you can see the breakdown there. 85% of them had a students in 12th grade. 8% had a students in 11th grade, and 7% had a students in 10th grade. You also see the breakdown for first generation status. I very much like to see that number get larger, a little larger every year. You see where the families live what regions of the US live in also the parents or the adults who take care of the students and respond to the survey when they were born. You see that most of these parents or adults or family members were born between 1965 and 1980, and their family income and ethnicity. So how did we collect this data? So if you are listening to this webinar, if you're viewing it today, or as the recording and you think you want to participate in this study next year, there's my address, email me.

[\(00:05:38\):](#)

You do not have to be a client of RNL. You do not have to be a client of Ardeo. Anyone can participate. But the way the study was sponsored by Ardeo, RNL and campusESP, but as I said earlier this is not tied to any of our products or services. Any institution can participate. 40 institutions participated in 2023, and you see that the breakdown is 36% of the responses of the 12,000 responses came from parents, family members who were invited from private institutions, 62 from public institutions. And you see the breakdown of the institutions there. I think it's pretty good breakdown there. And the institutions contacted the families themselves RNL or sponsors. We didn't contact them. Families were not incentivized. And it's a pretty long survey, so I'm very thankful to all the institutions that participated and to the families that completed the survey because it really, I think it speaks as to the importance of this topic for parents.

[\(00:06:54\):](#)

They were, they were happy taking a long survey and answering all the questions we were asking. And I'm going to ask you three questions during our presentation today. And the way I'm going to ask you is I'm going to ask you to either get your tablet or phone or open a separate browser window and go to pollev.com. Then you're going to enter RNL. And every time I ask you a question that screen is going to, to refresh, so you can also scan this QR code. And the first question we're asking you today is, what do you think are the family's most common fears regarding their children's college education? And let's see if we get any answers.

[\(00:08:00\):](#)

So what do you think the family's fears are? Cost and student loans, very true cost, too much debt. Cost of location, safety. That was a big topic this year. The parents are worried about safety more so even than previous years. Cost seems to be the top topic of concern, expenses, affordability, diversity. That actually was a topic too, that was mentioned often by the families. The lack of diversity was a concern for a lot of families. The location, yeah, the value of tuition affordability. Okay, let's give it just 10 more seconds. See if we get the career outcomes. Absolutely.

[\(00:09:13\):](#)

So you are absolutely right, and I'm just going to go back to the beginning. Cost, the cost, safety, affordability, diversity, location, value of tuition, affordability, and career outcomes. They're all things

that families are worried about and that play a part in in families' role in college planning and how they how they influence their students. The first section of their presentation, as you remember from the agenda, has to do with communication. We learned that 68% of families are actually open to hearing from you whenever you have important information to share. So that could be weekly. If the content is actually important for you to share it, they're happy to hear from you. 19% of them say at least once a week, and 1% says every day, <laugh>, we've seen that percentage of whenever they have information, important information to share, actually increase every year being the highest this year.

[\(00:10:22\)](#):

What about the communication channels? So we ask them two questions. We ask them, what are the channels that the institutions are using to communicate with you? And then we ask them, what are your preferred channels? And you see the blue one is the current the green one is preferred. So 67% of them say they're receiving direct mail from institutions, 36% of them preferred direct mail, and they could choose up to four channels in the preferred channel. Channel. Email is basically nine out of 10. Families say email is their top preferred communication method. 24% of them said pa, parent or family portal. 5% of them said social media. This one is a tricky one because a way I wish we hadn't included it in this question. Because 21% of them say they're actually aware of information from colleges and universities via social media.

[\(00:11:19\)](#):

That's, I think, the important stat for me. If you ask me, not so much, but the 5%, because I understand that they don't want to be connected. They don't want to be contacted via social media. However, the fact that 21% of them are seeing your information, they're seeing your ads on social media, I think is, if you ask me about social media and parents, that would be the stat I would want you to remember. So they are aware of colleges Facebook pages and Instagram telephone. So 4% of families telephone was the preferred and text message, actually, it was 27%. So very interesting remembering that email actually was the, the preferred, sorry, I went too fast. The preferred channel for everyone. I do want to mention a couple of things for the text message and the telephone.

[\(00:12:19\)](#):

The lower the income, the family, the more likely they are going to choose text message and telephone. So remember that the lower the income, the more likely they're going to choose the telephone and the text message. The higher the income, the more likely they are to choose the parent portal. And we've talked a lot about this among ourselves. But what would be the reason why lower income families are less likely to choose the parent and family portal is not so much their preference as to their knowledge, awareness, and degree of being comfortable actually using a parent and family portal. There students may have been in a high schools that didn't have a parent portal as high school students. So this parent portal is a complete new thing for them. So I don't think the fact that lower income families are not choosing the parent portal as the, as the channel they want to hear through from universities, means they don't want it. I think it's more an awareness thing. And as far as the telephone and the text message, I think lower income families are more likely to choose those methods because they're also less likely to have internet access at home. So very important topics that it comes to family incomes. And we're going to be talking next about information topics, and we're going to ask you the second out of the three questions I'm going to ask you today. So I'm going to go back to Poll Everywhere. And

[\(00:14:04\)](#):

What college planning topics do you think families are most interested in learning about? So I'm sure that was cost <laugh>, scholarship opportunities, programs, majors, visiting campus academic programs. You are absolutely, you're doing a great job at this. You are very much job opportunities after college

campus fit. That is a great suggestion, job placement outcomes. Well, you are very right. Let's look at what the data tells us.

Speaker 3 ([00:15:05](#)):

Yeah, they're, they're, yeah, they're absolutely spot on. And you know, it's interesting, as Raquel mentioned before, you can really the full report digs really deep, right, where you can look at 10th, 11th, and 12th grade. And one of the interesting things is as I've had the opportunity to look at the report, is the, the deviation between really one through five, it doesn't differ at all depending on, on grade, right? So you guys were spot on. The cost is, is obviously something that's, I think, paramount and has been paramount to a lot of families and their thoughts for well, 30 years, even back when, when I was a student in, in college, right? You're thinking about what programs exist, does it match, does the, the academic institution match with, with you know, the programs that they have with what I want to study?

([00:15:52](#)):

And same thing with admissions requirements. I think, you know, the big takeaway for me on a lot of this is that there are like four or five in the top 10 that all relate to money in some way, right? Whether it's cost, financial aid, paying the tuition bill the, the actual options that exist to, to, to finance their education. So all of these things point towards the fact that, you know, 40% are concerned at some level about something financial. And, you know, my takeaway from, from looking at this data is, are we doing a good enough job? And I say, we like proverbial you, proverbial we, right? Are we doing a good enough job of those that are sitting in the, in the seat about making it as transparent as we possibly can about that entire process for, for the students and families?

Speaker 2 ([00:16:48](#)):

Thank you very much. Very true. And the interesting part about this is that when we look at the different demographics there was not a lot of differences between the topics families wanted to know about based on their ethnicity, based on their income, based on where they live or based on their first generation status. Looks like information need equalizes families, which is good news for you. Because they all want to know basically the same things. There was a little bit of a difference based on where the students were in high school, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade. And you can see those details in the, in the report. But as far as demo, other demographics, there were just not differences at all. However, there were differences when we asked them what information they had seen, what information had they actually consumed, accessed.

([00:17:48](#)):

So what you're seeing here is the numbers for the families that said they had not seen that information. So what worries me is that half of the families we surveyed said they hadn't seen information about cost. Now, remember, 85% of these families had a students in 12th grade. So if by April of their students, 12th grade, half of them haven't seen information about cost. That is really, that's a scary thought for me. Academics, the, the, the number is very small. So you want to see smaller numbers here. These are the families that haven't seen the information application process and timeline. So that means three quarters of the families have seen it, a quarter hasn't seen it. So I, I want to see low numbers on this, but look at the, the one that's in the bottom, account services and paying the tuition bill. 62% of families say they have not seen information about that.

([00:18:50](#)):

And I know you all are doing a great job putting all this information out there, but families are still not seeing it, which means they may actually see it, but they may not understand it. They may be buried, may be too difficult to get to it. It may include terms that they're not familiar with. 63% of them said updates to their student records. So application deadlines missing documents things that have to do with their application for financial aid, et cetera. 58%, this number has increased this year. So almost six out of every 10 parents say they haven't seen information about safety precautions. So that's a really large number. And finally, the, the one I want to mention is the options to finance almost four out of every 10 families say they haven't seen information about that.

Speaker 3 ([00:19:46](#)):

Hey, Raquel, can I, can I jump on that one thing? Absolutely. so that, that one number, the, in the bottom left, the 62% on the account services. So at the University of Cumberland's, we're, we're currently going through a series of our orientation events, like I feel sure a lot of you on the call are right now. And one of the parents came to me as we're going through the library and they're going to talk to financial aid. And you know, I just asked, how's everything going as we all do? And he goes, yeah, kind of convenient that this is the first time I've talked to anybody about paying the bill and it's orientation time. And it made me, it actually made me think of this survey, and I thought, man, I remember that number sticking out. And it, it, it, and I know we'll talk about this a little bit later, but we view it as Raquel said that maybe we talk about it, but do we talk about it in the way that we understand or do we talk about it in the way that families understand?

([00:20:38](#)):

And so maybe I need to do a better job. You know, the thought that came into my head was maybe I need to have a, a parent panel of folks that's, you know, coming in that can, you know, tell me this kind of stuff so that we can you know, fix these things and make it as smooth. I mean, listen, I think our, our goal across the board is to get these to 0%. I think that's highly unlikely that that'll ever happen. But what can we do to make them so that they're similar to the academic numbers at 15%? I think I'd be happy there.

Speaker 2 ([00:21:08](#)):

Great. very good. This, that, I, I agree with everything you said, Jonathan, and what's worries me the most is that when we look at that percentage of families that haven't seen information, the number is even larger. When we look at the ethnicity of the family, you see that white families, only 29% of them say they haven't seen information about cost. But look at Native American, Hispanic, black, those numbers are much larger, the same with lower income families. So looks like the families that actually would that have incomes of lower than \$60,000, almost four or five out of them, they haven't seen information about the cost. And the same with first generation status. The, the, the first generation families are actually more likely to say they haven't seen information about this. Now, look at academics, and I'm not going to go through every single one of the information topics, so don't be afraid.

([00:22:13](#)):

There were a lot of them, but I'm not going to, I just speak the top four one to show you that, even though I told you that families had no differences when it came to its interest in information, there is a clear difference of access to college planning information on the topics that are most important to families. Look at admission requirements, income seems to be jumping out at this, right? Look at that. The difference between lower incomes and incomes are \$150,000 or more. And finally, application process and timeline. Again, it's the same pattern. Lower income, first generation families and families

of color seem to be having a harder time finding that information. So, Jonathan, you're going to tell us now about how we can use this information to help families.

Speaker 3 ([00:23:07](#)):

Yeah, and, and I think it goes back to what I said just a minute ago, right? You know, are we, are we bogging this down with a lot of admissions jargon that's maybe clear to us because we're in the industry and we understand it, but what can we do to make it a more accessible and, and more, you know, quite frankly, easier to understand for all folks? We all know that we are a large part of us serve heavy first generation population. So, you know, we've got to talk about it in ways that are clear to understand for them. And, and we've really got to keep in mind that, you know, we need to focus on what they need to know in the time that they need to know it, right? So speaking to 10th graders is going to be different than speaking to, to 12th graders, right?

([00:23:52](#)):

That you may not need to just give as, as much information. But one of the things that also came out of the survey is, you know, explaining the app application process, it seems like even with Common App, that the application process for a lot of folks seems to be a little bit more complicated than, than I think what we would like it to be. And that's not necessarily common app's fault, it's just, can we do the common app? Do we have to do your app if we do the common app? And I think there's just some confusion for families to be able to understand that, at least as, as I'm back in the chair seeing that and then listing out the requirements just as, as clear as we can. I think, you know, step one, step two, step three, I think those are easy to follow.

([00:24:35](#)):

Instead of this long laundry list, or at least in a bulleted format. I've, I've often thought, can we, can we make this just kind of a lockstep if, if you will. And then, you know, one of the things I think that we're all good at, but I think it's kind of a empty offer, is, hey, feel free to ask questions if, if you have them. But how do we make it available for folks to ask questions? Is it simple there, right? So as Raquel mentioned before maybe they don't have great internet access, and it seems like the ones who are going to you know, maybe not quite understand are the families who have lower incomes. And so how do they contact us? How can, how can we be more available for them to ask those, those questions? And then just, you know, making sure, even though academics was one of the smaller ones you know, faculty will be really excited about this one.

([00:25:26](#)):

And I say that as a former faculty member but just making sure that we put those academic programs out there, the fact that there's majors, there's minors and that we can explain what the terms are for completing those academic programs and the options that are for those academic programs. I know as, as I've kind of done a, a refresh of the website here recently, or our re-look, if you will, one of the things that I think not only our, our website can get better at, but a lot of websites is making it clear and transparent. What, what is the academic program? What's the, the course of study? You know, a lot of times it's, well, here's some of the courses you'll take. Well, I think it's good to show all the courses they'll take, and then what are the outcomes for those academic majors, right?

([00:26:12](#)):

Not only for your institution, but what are particular and maybe some future jobs that they can get with those, those programs. Cuz a lot of times folks are pretty linear in their thinking, and they only think it's a, it's a one track you know, frame of mind in terms of that academic program only leads to x. For instance, my, what I majored in in college, I'm not doing anything close to it right now. Right? so just,

just having that breadth of experience and understanding that there's a lot of things you can do different majors.

Speaker 2 ([00:26:45](#)):

Great. Thank you. And you're going to take us to this section Yeah, sure. On financing perceptions and plans.

Speaker 3 ([00:26:51](#)):

Yeah. So this is really interesting to me. I've always said I love the financial aid side, but I also love to not be a part of it because it is so complex and the rules are, it feels like ever changing the federal rules at least. And it's, it's just a scary thing to be a part of, to make sure that you're dotting all the i's and crossing the T's. And the first thing I'll say is go hug your financial aid officer today. Make sure they're okay with that. But you know, it is it is, it is a, a career field that I think is, is very much underappreciated and they get a lot of, a lot of slack or, or catch a lot of slack, and we should give them some, some slack.

([00:27:31](#)):

So, you know, one of the questions that the survey asked is, how important are financial aid and, and scholarships to you? And 84%, as we talked about before, said it's one of their top, top five factors. 45% you know, said, you know, Hey, look, as we, as we look at it, it is, it is our top five. And then as we look at who was most likely to say that, as Raquel mentioned before the, the black and Latino families were, were two of the predominantly highest, and then those with incomes of less than \$150,000, right? It doesn't take a PhD to figure out that you know, those folks are probably the ones that finances don't come quite as easy to them in their understanding of it. And, you know, with their, with the income.

([00:28:17](#)):

So we've got to make it as clear and transparent as we can. And then obviously, as somebody who has only worked at private institutions there is a lot of complexity when it comes to financial aid and scholarships, right? The, the public institutions do a fantastic job of laying it out. Here's, here's your tuition and then, you know, here's all the other fees. But what do we do as a private institution to make it as clear and transparent as possible to these families that you know, Hey, here's tuition, here's room board, here's books, here's fees here's all of these things all wrapped up into one. And then the next question is do you think that the money you will pay for your students' tuition is worthwhile? So the first thing that might jump out to you is that 80%, yeah, that's great.

([00:29:04](#)):

80% are saying yes, it's worthwhile, especially when it seems like the national rhetoric for years has been that it's not, the thing that I would call your attention to is that that number continues to decline. So while 80% seems like it's a great number if we go back even to the nineties, that number was well into the 90%. So we're seeing this, this kind of small slip of, of the fact that it, is it worth the, is it worth the investment, if you will those that are most likely to say yes. Right? Black and Latino families, again, incomes less than a hundred thousand dollars. This moves them in a lot of ways to a position that better, better positions them for a better life. You know, after college first gen families, kind of a no-brainer there.

([00:29:54](#)):

And then kind of interestingly families of, of 11th and 12th grade, it wasn't as high on the, the 10th grade side. And I, I wonder if, if a lot of that is because you know, the, maybe it's not forefront to their mind, and now we're thinking 11th and 12th grade. Okay, well, now it's time for son or daughter to go to college. And, and we, we, we, we think it should be worth it and we hope it's worth it, worth it. Those

that are undecided American Indian families. So the indigenous populations were those who were kind of on the fence. And then same thing, we had some first gen families that the, the, the difference between those two was, was not that great. So those that are on the fence are, are still there, and we need to do a better job of, of talking to those folks.

[\(00:30:42\)](#):

Alright, so how difficult is it to pay for, for education? So 30% are saying it's going to be somewhat difficult. I jokingly said, when I saw the slide, I want to talk to the 12%, let's say it's not difficult like Raquel, if we can pull those names and contact information, I'd love to send them some information. <Laugh>. but really, you know you're, you're still looking at, you know, even at somewhat difficult, which is really the lowest of those minus the not difficult at all. It's still 30%. I mean, the overwhelming majority are indicating that it is going to be difficult for them to pay for their, their students' education. And you know, that number 2021, obviously you look at, at the, the pandemic the numbers that you know, 2022 a little bit of a change there, but the deviation between these is not that great. But again the indigenous populations, Latino and, and African-American families are, are the most likely to say it's going to be difficult to pay for that.

Speaker 2 [\(00:31:44\)](#):

We're going to ask one more question. This is the last question we ask of you during the, during the session. So let me advance to it and activate it. We want you to, to guess what percentage of families do you think rule out institutions based on the sticker price? Jonathan is going to give you the answer as soon as we got back to the, to the deck, but we wanted to see what you thought. So looks like folks in this group think that it's going to be 50% or more of the families. I think we're stuck there at, so we have now 57% of the votes in this group bn, that is going to be more than 76% of the families that rule out institutions based on the sticker prize. So let's look at what the survey data tells us.

Speaker 1 [\(00:33:17\)](#):

So I think the silence there is because I'm going to be speaking to this slide, Jonathan's looking at me like, Hey, I didn't, I didn't prep for that one, Matt. But anyways, so, so the good news is that once again, our Raquel, our audience is preclude in because it's 68%. And when you think about that you see, you know, a breakout of some information here, but I want to still stay on that left upper box there to look at the one year growth in that, in that that figure from 58 to 68% are ruling colleges out. And you notice then when you break it out by 10th grade, 11th grade, 12th grade you know, in, I guess I always thought that by 12th grade, you know, you, you've sort of figured things out, you've probably got your short list created.

[\(00:34:08\)](#):

But I think you know, once again, we think back to the earlier responses that we looked at where people are saying 50% hadn't heard about cost as, as a senior. And then they find out about it and they're like, oh, that's not going to happen. Can't make that happen. And so I think you know, the, the thought here from my perspective is and Johnson's actually going to speak to something that University of Cumberlands has done, but we, we really do have a value sticker price, financial aid conundrum that's going to only be addressed through educating people and educating people in ways at, at the right time through the right medium for them to, and, and using the right words, frankly, so that they can appreciate what is possible as a means to attend your institution. That's the takeaway from this slide for me.

[\(00:35:09\)](#):



So obviously part of funding college for, for a number of students according to this only 36% don't plan to attend excuse me, plan to, to take out student loans. And 56% don't plan to take out parent loans. What we know, and I'm sure many of you as practitioners are familiar with this, their plan not to borrow sometimes bumps up, up against the reality so that, that father that Jonathan talking to at orientation the other day may not have planned to borrow, but all of a sudden he hears about cost and he hears about the rest of his financial aid, and it's like, okay, I guess I am going to have to make myself aware of how these loans work and, and, and, and move forward with that. I think it's also interesting to note that 71% of the respondents said that they have borrowing concerns, which is greater than the number of people that are either saying yes or they're unsure about actually borrowing.

[\(00:36:06\)](#):

So what we know, therefore, is that borrowing concerns is actually leading some to say, I'm not going to borrow, not surprisingly, but once again, you have to ask yourself in your institution setting at your price point, at your financial aid, how many of the families can actually afford to attend without borrowing, right? So, you know, as you start to consider these, these realities for your families, then that last bullet point, 74% those borrowing concerns. So you can have borrowing concerns. We've all talked to many families who are like, I'd rather not borrow. Okay, sign me up. That's true for all of us. I'd rather not borrow. But when those borrowing concerns actually lead to the point where it's changing the way in which a family is, quite frankly, in many cases, allowing their son or daughter to consider their options, that's a problem. If we believe in access, if we believe that our institution is a great place and there's good fit students that aren't able to attend, then these borrowing concerns are not something to, to take lightly. It's something that we need to look at ways to address.

Speaker 2 [\(00:37:14\)](#):

Hey Matt, can I ask you a question?

Speaker 1 [\(00:37:16\)](#):

Yeah, please.

Speaker 2 [\(00:37:17\)](#):

What is the top borrowing concern for families that would affect their college planning negatively?

Speaker 1 [\(00:37:25\)](#):

Well, I, I, I wish I could tell you that that top borrowing concern is consistent across, but as we've already seen, there are demographic realities that can shift that. So some is just a lack of knowledge and the social media and media influence on people, right? So I'd like to talk about the fact there's rational and irrational borrowing concerns. My son who went into ministry had a rational borrowing concern, <laugh>, he was going into a career field that was not going to pay really well. So that, that can be a rational concern about borrowing. But the, the, the media has, in fact, we have this in some of our other presentations, the media has really painted a picture that's just out of, out of kilter in terms of the actual reality of borrowing in the United States today for undergraduate institutions stories over this past year in major media outlets, the anecdotal story that they like to talk about had an average of over \$90,000 of borrowing for that undergraduate degree. And yet we know that the average amount of borrowing for a bachelor's degree in the US is in the thirties, \$30,000 range, right? So I think there's also some of that. And unfortunately, and, and back to access, I think it's, if you're a second generation family, at least you've got a context, your own context. If you're first generation, media is probably playing an outsized role in a negative way that is negatively impacting their son or daughter's choice set for college.

[\(00:39:03\)](#):

Thank you. Yeah. Well, thank you for asking the question. So now not surprising folks. We, we co-sponsored this research and one of the benefits of co-sponsoring research with Raquel and r and I is that there are some questions then that get asked that help to define how families would respond to, in our case, a loan repayment assistance program. And so this question, you know, straight off the top being offered a loan repayment assistance program, what, you know, would it impact the students? Where, where they would decide to enroll, you know, big number, 56%, over half of all the response of 12,000 respondents over half said, yes it would. And yet think back to the slides that Jonathan shared most recently, and look at those who are most likely to agree. A lot of similarities there. Now I want to add into that if you're a wishy data person, think about the profile of the graduating high school classes that are predicted over the coming years.

[\(00:40:10\)](#):

So yeah, you get caught up in the big number about the demographic cliff, but also think about the profile of those that will be graduating from high school. And if you're not able to address first generation family concerns, incomes of less than a hundred thousand students you know, students of color, if you're not able to address those concerns, then you're going to, you're going to be walking away from part of the market. And so I wraps obviously have a, a higher impact on, on some of these. I will say I'm looking at Jonathan, I thinking about conversations we've had over the years families of student athletes, and we know from some of our, our partner institutions at Dale that are also utilizing I wraps to recruit non-athletes, spectators fans that student athletes are still very much responsive to this because families are counting on what if they've got a student athlete, they're counting on a scholarship, but they also are typically educated enough to know that's going to be towards tuition. So I can't remember the college that just announced they're going to go free tuition for every family under 80,000. And I looked them up on, on ipeds, their room and board is 16,000 a year.

[\(00:41:33\)](#):

I would say that those families that are considering that institution are still going to be looking at loans to be able to afford the, the room and board. So anyway, let's move on to the next slide. So this concept then builds on the previous two slides. So, you know, a parent saying, I would be interested in receiving an LRAP as part of the students, my students' financial aid package. Now we're bumping all the way up to 67%. So what I like to say is, the difference between those previous responses in the fifties and the 67% is it may not make the final difference and where my son or daughter enrolls, but wouldn't I like to have the safety net of a loan repayment assistance program so that as my son or daughter is progressing through college, and if they're undecided or if they change their major, if they all those rational concerns about loan repayment as it relates to income after graduation, even those families that are saying we're, we're going to find a way for them to go to that school and study what they want to study. This difference of additional 10, 12% is primarily those families that are saying, I, I would really like to have that safety net. I'd like to have that assurance as my son or daughter goes off to college. And once again, you know, the same, most likely a green families down here. That's still the most likely groups that are saying that. But the reality is, if I can get a safety net, I'll take that. Yeah.

[\(00:43:07\)](#):

So I love this slide. Malcolm Gladwell's book Tipping Point is, is comes to mind here, this concept of all other things being equal. So think about your top competitors and, and now I want you to put on the mindset of the parents not yours. Cuz I, I, I am assured that all of you as professionals, every one of your top competitors, you have reasons, real reasons why you are differentiated from them. Now, I want you to realize the parents don't always have that information. They don't always appreciate that information. They may not even agree with that information. Their perception is that you're very much

similar to your top competitor. What this data point says to me is that all the things being equal, I'm looking at this school and this school and I think they're equal. They would favor an institution that provides them an L wrap, right?

(00:44:03):

So it's a tipping point. That's boy to land the plane, the tipping point concept there saying, you know, I'm not going to choose a college that I've never heard of solely because they're offering an L a but doggone it, when I'm looking at two schools and my son or daughter is comparing these two and I a p can absolutely make a difference. And again, the most likely agree can stays consistent. We've seen consistency across each of these questions as to which families most likely agree with, with the statement that the prompt that's been given them. So we're going to throw it back to Jonathan here to talk about Cumberland's. I, I, I sort of did some foreshadowing there, Jonathan, so you can tie

Speaker 3 (00:44:48):

Yeah. Yeah. All good. Well, you know, I think there's a couple things that Cumberland's has done as, as we've looked at both, both RL and Ardeo. So the first I will say is, you know, and Raquel may put a plugin for this later, but the survey that she does again, is free. You get some really detailed data out of this. So one of the things that we have done and I committed to her today, is that we're going to do the survey again next year. So AR and Camp CSP and RL sponsoring this, this survey is paramount to helping us shape what we're going to do for the future, right? And one of the things that we have done in 2018, and unfortunately I can't take credit for this, but we did a tuition reset, right? We don't, we don't like to say a reset because we're permanently cutting tuition, right?

(00:45:35):

We have no intent of slowly going back and we are basically at the five year mark. So if you've done your research on tuition resets in the past, you know, that we are past the point of where we should have gotten that enrollment lift. But we still maintain a an all time high incoming class again this year. So we have not seen that decline. And I think part of that reason is because it, it didn't just fade into the background, it is still something that we are really hanging our hat on. So couple things. One is our price is now comparable to public institutions, right? Our next goal is to, and that's four year Publix in the state of Kentucky. Our goal, our next goal is going to be to be on par with the community college system in con in the state of Kentucky in terms of total cost.

(00:46:29):

So you'll see on the right there this year we introduced the one price promise, and that is a total cost tuition room, board fees, and books. So there is just one price that all students pay and that's the 19,175. So there's no ambiguity on what the total cost is. If they get a parking pass or if they get books or you know, this and that and, and, you know, add eight, 8,000 different things. It is a flat cost for, for families. And our, our, what we have found, and this survey has shown that my conversations with, with families at the orientations have shown this, families are still concerned about cost. Even though we're on par with the state supported institutions, they're still concerned about cost, right? When I'm having those conversations, you know, and I'm welcoming them to campus, I, I routinely say, I feel sure one of the reasons that drew you to the University of Cumberlands is our, our total.

(00:47:29):

And, and I've got parents that have pulled me aside. Yeah, but we're, we still don't know how we're going to pay for this, right? And we're, we're still stacking athletic scholarships on top of that as well. So with that being said, we know that L wraps continue to be a vital piece for us. As a matter of fact, even despite the fact that we have this one price promise and we've cut tuition drastically we'll enroll over a

hundred students this year that that will have I wraps. And to me, it goes back to what Matt said before. In terms of that, answering that question that was in the survey of being offered an LRA would impact my son or daughters you know decision to enroll at the institution incomes with less than a hundred thousand dollars was one of those.

[\(00:48:13\)](#):

And, and the black and Latino families was another one of those. And, and the way that we specifically offer it, because we can ebb and flow with how we want to offer it, but one of the ways that we offer it is to those who are going to have to take out plus loans because we know that that's going to be a paramount concern for them. That, you know, hey, we're taking out federal loans, we're probably getting a Pell Grant cause we're in rural Appalachia but we also may have to even take out a parent plus loans. So we offer it to students who have to take out parent plus loans, and y'all we're still going to enroll over a hundred students with folks who have take out parent plus loans with that, that total cost. So but all that to say, we've done a lot of that. We're really focused on that total cost. Our, our total population at the institution is a little bit above 18,000. And our undergraduate main campus continues to have all time highs. And, and I shared with Matt the other day where actually have some housing concerns, which is a good problem to have,

Speaker 1 [\(00:49:10\)](#):

Jonathan, it is a good problem to have. And I still remember those conversations around the cabinet table looking at the Vice President for student development who had residents life and using that phrase for some reason, it never seemed to, to sit well with her. But anyway,

Speaker 3 [\(00:49:23\)](#):

<Laugh>.

Speaker 1 [\(00:49:24\)](#):

Yeah. So obviously we've been referring to a loan repayment assistance program, LRAP. We've got a few slides here. I do want to remind you that you can submit questions through the question box on your dialogue box. We've gotten a few, but we're getting closer to the end, so I want to bring those back. So what is LRAP and how does it work? An LRAP is an enrollment tool. Loan is in the name loan repayment assist, but it's an enrollment tool. We do not provide loans, okay? And the LRAP promise you see there, is that if a student's income after graduation is modest, their LRAP will help repay their loans. Now, let me just anticipate that each of you is wondering what modest means. And so if you're going to send me a question about that, I'm just going to answer it now.

[\(00:50:12\)](#):

It varies. So each institution, depending on the region of the country, the programs that you offer, the likely career fields that you go into, my colleagues who are actuaries would come back to us and recommend something. But it's sort of a marketing decision, a pricing decision for you to, to have with us. But it needs to be high enough, obviously, so that the family really sees value in, in the, in the safety net that we're, that we're offering them. But modest is what we use there. We cover all the loans that you're financial aid office certifies typically used in the admissions and financial aid office. Equally, you can, as Jonathan's already referenced, you can use it with as many or few students as you want in terms of the types of students for traditional undergrad, bachelor's degree seeking students.

[\(00:51:01\)](#):

The only caveat statements we have here is that they have to have at least two years remaining before they would graduate. That's just an actuary reality for us. We come train support you throughout the year. And then we actually also carry a lot of the water for marketing. So we have a phone team email cadence to our phoners, our native Spanish speakers. And so, you know, we've got a parent that would like to talk about finances in a language they're most comfortable with. We, we will address that. So that's, that can be a nice benefit to you. And then in terms of the actual work with a student, cause we think Jonathan used to talk about this being a hand up, not a handout. The student must graduate from your institution to ever receive a benefit, okay?

[\(00:51:51\)](#):

And then they have to work at least 30 hours a week. Cause we're not unemployment coverage. And if they're making less than that upper income threshold, that modest income amount that we've said, and they're making their loan payments, then we're going to start cutting them checks. We're going to cut a check to the graduate and to the parent. If the parent's making a plus loan as Jonathan's graduates would be doing that's what we do. We cut them checks and the amount of that check is going to be based on their income after graduation, and we're going to continue to assist them until one or two things happens. Either loans are entirely repaid or until their income goes above that, that income threshold that, that we've set. So, pretty straightforward. Just a quick slide here to say, once again, you can utilize I wraps in whatever way best supports your goals.

[\(00:52:40\)](#):

So we have some institutions, as you can see at the top marketing and L a p to their entire incoming freshman class. We have schools represented there in the middle that are targeting specific groups. Maybe a major, maybe non-athletes, maybe a certain EFC limit. Of course, that's going to change, isn't it, with the fafsa simplification. But anyway, they, they're targeting groups. And then the bottom, you can also utilize I wraps one-off within your financial aid appeals for retention purposes anytime where you're having a, a specific conversation with a family. All those are all, those are options. So that's, that's, that's what I reps do, and you've heard how families are responding to them. So we've got a few slides here to wrap the deck, and then we'll have some questions, Jonathan.

Speaker 3 [\(00:53:28\)](#):

Yes. Yeah, yeah, but I'll take the first one. So as we look at how students and how we need to communicate to students and overcoming some of their fears, you know, the research that we talked about that it is, it is the top four, really the top five that are remaining consistent, but the top four do not deviate at all, right? Cost, academics, admissions requirement, and the app the application process are all at the forefront of, of students and families' minds.

Speaker 1 [\(00:53:57\)](#):

And the second thing we wanted to focus on then is that your institution is being ruled out based on sticker price alone for some percentage of students. And so if all they're hearing about cost is your sticker price, you're losing people. So even at an early age, you need to be starting to talk about cost in a, in a deeper way than just the price point.

Speaker 3 [\(00:54:20\)](#):

Yeah. Number three here we as admissions folks, we got to do a better job of providing more transparent cost. For especially Tiffany 11th grade students, as Raquel mentioned, they're, they're not as satisfied with the, the, the data that we're providing them.

Speaker 1 ([00:54:37](#)):

Number four here, how families are going to pay is absolutely a critical question, even in search. So if you're spending money on search to get 10th graders to talk to them about it, don't assume, oh, they're 10th graders, their parents aren't, the parents of 10th graders are engaged on this. And so you've got to address these concerns as, as early as they're willing to talk to you, you should be talking to them about these issues.

Speaker 3 ([00:55:02](#)):

And number five, here, you'll remember that a lot of what students and families said that they didn't receive a lot of information on a lot of it was related to financial aid and scholarships. And, you know, we've got to make sure that we're relaying that information to them and doing it through the appropriate communication channels that Raquel talked about with email being the number one.

Speaker 1 ([00:55:24](#)):

Yeah. And to that end number six here and I will tell you I learned something again today, Raquel, thank you. As you were reviewed, that information, that based on income level, that the preferred message of email and direct mail needs to be supplemented also by text and phone. So if you're not doing something in text and phoning, you're cutting out part of the market and unfortunately, the part of the market that needs the, probably the greatest assistance in hearing about your institution

Speaker 3 ([00:55:57](#)):

And folks, our communication has to be written for the audience that's going to read it, right? Especially when we know at least at Cumberlands. And I think it's true for a lot of the folks that participate in the survey, a lot of first gen families, right? And a lot of families of, of, of different ethnicities. And we've got to write the admissions information in ways that they can best digest it. And so if you take anything away from this, please know that you know, I need to do a better job of that. Cumberlands needs to do a better job of that. And I think we collectively need to do a better job of that.

Speaker 1 ([00:56:32](#)):

And number eight, probably not surprising. If you're trying to address is the investment worth it and if that investment for a family is going to include loans and this research pretty clear that an LRAP is going to be important to help you enroll more students. So we've got three minutes and three questions. So here we go. Rapid fire, <laugh>. So Jonathan people want to know how are you addressing borrowing concerns at Cumberland's? I guess that's beyond the LRAP, because you've already addressed that.

Speaker 3 ([00:57:03](#)):

Yeah. yeah, I think that there's another, there's really two things. Primarily we do the, the first is L wraps, especially for those who, and we do use it as one-offs for families who are still voicing the, the concerns. We will offer them an L wrap. I think the second thing is to point towards you know, two really two things on this, this point. One is that it, if they're going to go to even a state supported school in Kentucky, they're going to pay a comparable amount, right? They're going to borrow the states do a very, very good job of saying, our tuition cost is X. And so people will say, oh, well it's only \$5,000 to go to school there. No, that's the tuition cost. That's not an all-in cost, it's not tuition room board and books. So really just relaying to them that, you know, compare apples to apples and not apples to oranges. But helping them understand too that they're, like Matt mentioned before, you're not going to

borrow \$90,000 to go to go to school here, right? The average for us is a little bit lower than \$30,000, but that average borrowing is still lower than where else they go.

Speaker 1 ([00:58:13](#)):

So Raquel, the next question is for you. You've, you've said it once, but it's bears repeating. How do I participate in this survey next year?

Speaker 2 ([00:58:23](#)):

Well, you email me and I will send you all the information you need and I'm going to make it very easy for you. I promise. And you get a hundred responses to the survey from the families that you invite. You get a report that Jonathan was mentioning earlier was very helpful to them. So hopefully it will be helpful to you too.

Speaker 3 ([00:58:46](#)):

And I'll just put an additional plugin there. It is really, really easy.

Speaker 2 ([00:58:50](#)):

Thank you.

Speaker 1 ([00:58:51](#)):

So this, it's, it's unfair to leave this last question like this, but given the Supreme Court's decision today regarding using race and admissions, how does that decision impact your thoughts related to the information we've shared today? This person asked specifically about LRAP, but if, if either of you want to respond more broadly and then I'll answer from an LRAP perspective.

Speaker 2 ([00:59:16](#)):

Actually, I'll go first if you don't mind, Jonathan. I think that's where we can really concentrate and celebrate first generation families. Cause we know first generation families are going to be more likely non-white and lower incomes. So that's my take <laugh>.

Speaker 1 ([00:59:37](#)):

Great answer.

Speaker 3 ([00:59:38](#)):

Yeah, I would agree. I I'm on vacation right now and the, the first thing I saw was that popup this morning. And, you know, watching the news, I want to read the opinion of the Supreme Court, but, you know, I think to Raquel's point is, is spot on. We, I think if anything, we need to do a better job of just being transparent with, with, you know, really everybody, but particularly those populations. And we've got to do a better job of just making sure that people understand what they're doing, what the outcomes will be for their, their degree programs as well. Thank

Speaker 1 ([01:00:14](#)):

You, Jonathan. And, and front and center. As it relates to LRAP I think the research data findings are really clear that black families, Hispanic families responded that an LRAP would make a difference. And Raquel's point we still should be able to market the first generation in a way that is very straightforward.

And in doing so we have an opportunity, we have an opportunity. We may have to change our approach some, but we have an opportunity to see families access higher education and reap the benefits, long-term benefits that higher education can bring. So we, again, we're, we, we thank you so much for being here with us today. You know, you'll get a a copy of this recording, a link to this recording. Obviously if there's any follow up, you've got our follow up to sign up for the survey to ask Jonathan about tuition resets or other, other such things. And, and we'd love to talk to you about implementing I wraps in your next recruitment cycle. But again, thank you so much and have a great afternoon.

Speaker 2 ([01:01:24](#)):

Thank you. Thank you all. Bye.