

# State education cuts reduce share of low-income students going to college

Kevin Martinez  
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State funding for higher education has fallen 17 percent between 2008 and 2012, after adjusting for inflation, according to figures released by the Center for American Progress (CAP) earlier this year.

Last month, the organization published a report breaking down its findings by state, showing that nearly every state in the US cut per-pupil higher education spending since the start of the recession.

The report, entitled *A Great Recession, A Great Retreat*, concluded that state education spending cuts have “resulted in a decline in the college-attendance rate among low-income students and a dramatic slowing of the rate among middle-income students.”

The report found that, “Between 2008 and 2012, the share of students borrowing to finance their education increased from 35 percent to 40 percent, and the average amount borrowed annually increased from \$6,200 to \$7,800.” Working-class and middle-class students are increasingly being priced out of higher education, and those who decide to go to college are forced to take on a lifetime of crippling debt.

In recent years, the costs of paying for college have increased while the median family income has plummeted.

The report found that 20 states cut their per-student spending by more than 20 percent, while 18 other states cut their per student spending between 5 and 20 percent. Overall, 44 of the 50 states cut their per-student spending between 2007 and 2012.

“Measured as a share of total revenue, the amount of funding that public colleges receive from state governments has steadily retreated, with all 50 states cutting the share of budgets going to education.” The report noted that “Eight states experienced a decline of more than 10 percentage points; 27 states decreased the share of revenue from state governments between 5

percentage points and 10 percentage points, and 15 states experienced a decline of less than 5 percentage points.

The report noted, “there are a few exceptions, but the general trend demonstrates that the states that decreased their share of state funding the most increased reliance on tuition dollars the most.” Only three states lowered tuition, while the remaining 47 states increase tuition.

In a previous report entitled *Public College Quality Compact for Students and Taxpayers*, the CAP found that between fiscal years 2003 and 2010, state funding for education declined from 30.9 percent of total revenue to 22.3 percent. The majority of the decline occurred after 2008.

K-12 education spending by states has also been significantly cut. In 14 states, per-pupil spending declined by at least 10 percent between fiscal year 2008 and 2015. In Oklahoma, per pupil spending declined by almost 24 percent.

Compounding the effect of state budget cuts, the federal government has led a concerted attack on public education through the Obama Administration’s “Race to the Top” program, which systematically de-funds schools in poor neighborhoods due to low standardized test scores.



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