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INSIDE HIGHER ED: THE KEY

EP 65: DEBATING THE VALUE OF COLLEGE ARTS (AND OTHER) PROGRAMS

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DOUG LEDERMAN: Is getting a master's degree in the arts a terrible idea? Are universities taking advantage of students by offering programs in low-paying fields such as film, journalism, and social work? Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the The Key. I'm Doug Lederman, editor of Inside Higher Ed and host of this weekly news and analysis podcast.

Federal data now allow us to look at how graduates of individual college and university programs fare economically after they finish. That has opened the door for think-tank analysts and journalists to identify programs whose graduates on average earn more than enough to repay their student debt or don't. Many of programs whose graduates don't earn enough to repay their debt prepare people for industries that don't pay very well, but that society values, such as teaching or the clergy. Degrees in the arts are a particular target, and that's the focus of today's episode.

Joining me for the discussion are Kevin Carey, vice president for education policy and knowledge management at New America, and Doug Dempster, former dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas at Austin. The jumping off point for today's conversation is an essay that Kevin wrote in another higher education publication with the provocative title "The Great Master's Degree Swindle."

KEVIN CAREY: Students are borrowing a lot of money. I mean, if you look at the earnings data, the

comparison doesn't look too good. It seems as if a lot of students are borrowing money to start careers that are perhaps not getting them enough money to pay their loans back. And that's a problem that's an underrecognized problem. It's certainly not a problem that is confined to things like film studies, although I do say that there is a pretty broad pattern where if you look at the programs that are, seem to have the most alarming numbers of in terms of a lot of debt and not a lot of earnings, arts-related programs are disproportionately represented.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Doug Dempster discusses the objections he raised to Kevin Carey's piece in a written rebuttal and broadens the scope beyond arts programs to other fields that don't pay very well.

DOUG DEMPSTER: There's a general issue here, which is how are we as a society going to educate these creatives and other professionals for these fields that are low wage, but are essential to our culture and economy? If you shift that focus from the arts to something like nursing or social work or childcare, or to be more pointed with the two of you, journalism, we need well educated professionals in all those fields, and we have to figure out how to afford that. And I would say we have to figure out how we're going to make those opportunities accessible to the less affluent students out there.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Before we continue, here's a word from Formstack, sponsor of this week's episode of The Key.

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DOUG LEDERMAN: Now on to today's very civil debate between Kevin Carey and Doug Dempster. Kevin and Doug, welcome to The Key, and thanks for being here.

KEVIN CAREY: Great to be here.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Kevin, can you briefly lay out the arguments you made in your recent piece "The Great Master's Degree Swindle"?

KEVIN CAREY: Thanks. You know, that was an article I wrote for the Chronicle of Higher Education, really, you know, reacting to some of the conversation around an investigative piece in the Wall Street Journal that focused on high levels of borrowing among film students in the graduate film program at Columbia University, and showing that a lot of the graduates from that program had both borrowed a lot of money and were not making very much money in their careers, subsequent to finishing the degree. And the article was made possible by some recent big changes, recent, say like last five years or so, changes in the way the federal government gathers information about individual programs at colleges and universities. It allows us for the first time to look at both how much money students are borrowing if they're a part of the federal aid program, as most students are, and crucially, by kind of matching up various federal wage records, what their earnings are.

So the point of the article I wrote--writers don't write headlines, I just want to make that clear, so I don't think the word "swindle" appears in the text anywhere--but very much in the vein of saying that, hey, this is not kind of an isolated thing. There are a lot of graduate programs at American colleges and universities where students are borrowing large amounts of money because there are no hard caps on how much money you can borrow to attend graduate school, whereas there are for undergraduate colleges. Students are borrowing a lot of money. I mean, if you look at the earnings data, the comparison doesn't look too good. It seems as if a lot of students are borrowing money to start careers that are perhaps not getting them enough money to pay their loans back. And that's a problem that is an underrecognized problem.

It's certainly not a problem that is confined to things like film studies, although I do say that there is a pretty broad pattern where if you look at the programs that are, seem to have the most alarming numbers in terms of a lot of debt and not a lot of earnings, arts-related programs are disproportionately represented. And that's true at both the graduate and the undergraduate level, and it's true at a variety of colleges--for profit, nonprofit, and even public in some cases.

DOUG LEDERMAN: That was obviously the point that brought Doug into the conversation. I think Doug was particularly interested in and potentially troubled by Kevin's description in a couple of paragraphs about the overall state of arts education. You wrote a letter in response to Kevin's piece about what he had to say about arts education, and can you fill us in on what you said there?

DOUG DEMPSTER: So I'll begin by saying I agree with everything that Kevin just said, [LAUGH] because it was a bit more moderate in its judgment on arts programs. But first, I'll just say I appreciate the reporting Kevin and other outlets, the Wall Street Journal have done bringing attention to this student

debt crisis, as the Wall Street Journal is now calling it, and how that's really being exaggerated by borrowing for graduate programs. That's all well taken, and higher education needs to be paying more attention to that, and solving that from the extent that we can. So we agree on that.

There are two points I wanted to make in my rejoinder to Kevin, and I'll summarize. One is, there's a reflex, almost a tendency to identify the high cost of arts education and the poor wage return on investment, and then jump to a condemnation of those careers, those professions, and all of arts education as, and it wasn't Kevin's term, but swindle. And I took him to task for saying that all funding of arts education and postsecondary education is--I can't remember your exact term, Kevin, but it was a sweeping condemnation of my sector of the postsecondary education. And what troubles me about that is there's a reflex in our culture and society to say that artists are not a critical and perhaps even valued sector of our economy and our culture. There's an interesting report just out by the Academy of Arts and Sciences in which they did a survey showing that Americans put a high value on arts and culture and entertainment, like at 80 percent, they think it's a great part of their lives, but put a very low value on artists and creatives. 20 percent of the respondents thought that artists aren't contributing much. So that's a weird disconnect, and I want to push back on this idea that these are pointless dead-end, unvalued professions, and the education that leads to them is maybe wasteful.

The second thing I really want to get us to focus on, and this, Doug, just as you were saying, this applies not just to the arts but to many of the professions. There are lots of professions that are low wage professions, which nonetheless require some high degree of education beyond high school. And the arts are among those in many fields, not all of it. If you want to be a rock drummer, you probably don't have to go to college. But there are lots of other fields in the arts that require a more advanced level of education. And these are generally low-wage professions. That's beyond any dispute.

There's a general issue here, which is how are we as a society going to educate these creatives and other professionals for these fields that are low wage, but are essential to our culture and economy. If you shift the focus from the arts to something like nursing or social worker, or child care, or to be more pointedly with the two of you, journalism, we need well educated professionals in all those fields and we have to figure out how to afford that. And, I would say, we have to figure out how we're going to make those opportunities accessible to the less affluent students out there. So what I want to do is say, let's start talking about how we're compensating those professionals in the world, because part of the solution to the student debt crisis is to make sure that these professionals are earning enough in their postgraduate years to repay their debts, or to recover the cost of their education.

DOUG LEDERMAN: A lot to unpack in what both of you said, just as a reminder in case, sounds like,

Doug, you slipped your mind. Kevin called it a financial catastrophe for students, arts education. So there are lots of different directions we can go in. And I guess we'll probably maybe come back to some of the questions about sort how we might go about judging the values of professions.

But focusing for a minute on where you just went, Doug, sort of putting aside the, what they get paid, and focusing for a minute on the education and training costs or investment that they and society makes. How do you think about that issue that, about how we deal partly with the arts, but also with what are right now lower-wage professions?

KEVIN CAREY: But actually I want to own up to the whole quote, which is, the whole apparatus of university-based arts education is a financial catastrophe for students. I think Doug's point is well taken, that that is an overly broad characterization. Now, I'll own up to that. It's not the case that the whole apparatus, every single part of it is a catastrophe. I think too many parts of it are disproportionately a catastrophe, so I just want to say, I think that's a fair critique of what I wrote.

Like to the question that you asked, I mean, I don't think universities can charge prices based on the labor market that they wish we had as a society. I think they have to be responsible for the one that we do have, because students have to go into that market and earn money to pay their loans back. And, you know, there's a lot of benefits to higher education that can't be boiled down to earnings, but you have to pay your loans back with money. And so I think a lot of this discussion has been magnified or contextualized by a growth in borrowing.

I also think Doug is exactly right. You bring up journalism as a good example. We rely on our colleges and universities to prepare people for like almost every career that exists, increasingly so, right? You know, there are a lot of careers where you gain a certain kind of skills and credentials, and you kind of plug into a system where as long as your skills and credentials are good enough, you can have a stable career. School teaching is a good example of that, right? A lot of the healthcare profession is a good example of that.

There are other kind of careers where that's not the case and there's a tournament aspect to it one way or the other, right, because of something about the range of possible kind of skills that you're conducting to certain ways of expressing yourself aesthetically and the way that markets respond to that, or people respond to it. I think theater is like that. I think probably, I'm not an expert, but many parts of arts education are like that.

Certainly journalism is like that. Any good editor will tell you that some people like have the goods and some people don't, and some people kind of rise to the top and some people don't. You could have frankly written a version of that Wall Street Journal article about the Columbia School of Journalism, which charges people \$110 grand for a nine-month program, and I know for a fact, personally, I think the guy who just retired as the dean of the Columbia School of Journalism used to be my jobs here at New America, Steve Coll, it's a waste of money for a lot of people. Don't do that if you're listening. Don't go spend \$110,000 to get a bachelor's degree in journalism, go get a job as a journalist and do it, and learn that way.

And that kind of gets to a larger point and kind a question that I would love to hear Doug's thoughts on, which is, I feel like part of the problem, my guess is that because we rely on universities for all kinds of career preparation, there are certain kinds of career preparation where really the better thing is more of an apprenticeship model, you know, where you kind of form a relationship, you're kind of in the business, in the industry. You learn as you work, not a borrow an enormous amount of money up front, take all the risk on to yourself for entering that tournament where inevitably some substantial number of people are going to be the losers in it. But that would be a better way. Don't do it that way because you have to go to a college, and colleges just sort of charge everyone the same amount of money to go to grad school.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Doug, I'm interested in that point Kevin just made, is to what extent is arts education broadly about preparing people for careers in the arts versus other things, and is it the most efficient way, the best way, the only way for us to do that?

DOUG DEMPSTER: Great questions. Formal education, postsecondary degree-based education, has, it is now the way we are training artists and creatives in various fields. Not all of them--there are apprentice tracks. So here's a really interesting data point, and this comes from a study done by a couple of sociologists and economists at Northeastern. Only 25 percent of the professional artists that the American Community surveyed counts in the economy, and these may be ten-year-old data. But only 25 percent of them have post-secondary degrees in the arts, visual or performing arts. So that means 75 percent of that labor force, professional labor force, has found a different track into those professions. Now, it's also a very well... They must, all 60 percent of them have a college degree of some kind. But it's telling that so many are finding their way into those professions other than through a fine arts field of study in a college. And by their measure, the only, something like 25 percent of the graduates with fine arts degrees are working as professional artists.

After now close to 40 years teaching and administering in professional art schools, a pattern I've seen over all that period is that the more competitive the market has become for those musicians or dancers or composers or playwrights, the larger the educational burden, the more we try to pack into the curriculum, the more training we try to give them. And that, of course, increased costs. We spend more on more distinguished faculty who have better networking opportunities for their graduates, and the cost of education, and the specialization in the education gets more and more intense every year as we move forward. And the extent to which the labor market actually using higher education and degree programs as a gate, as a sieve, for who gets those entry level opportunities, we're sort of stuck with this pattern. I don't know how to break from that.

I agree with Kevin that we should be looking for alternative routes into these professions, whether it's journalism or in various arts professions. But that's pushing back against a long tide. And I'm not exactly sure how to do that. Of course, publishing these data on earnings return on investment is one corrective in this, and I think Kevin and you, Doug, would probably agree that the Title IV funding for higher education, especially for graduate education, has been too liberal, leading to lots of exploitative programs and imprudent borrowing. So there are ways we can constrain formal postsecondary education, forcing students into alternative routes, and employers into alternative sources of talent.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Kevin, I don't know how you feel about this, but I actually see the tide that Doug describes starting to ever so slightly recede. We're definitely seeing the emergence of more alternatives to traditional paths to degrees, though it will shock, no one that we're seeing a lot more Silicon Valley startups in coding and data analytics than in arts or journalism training, and we are starting to see more employers look for other ways to judge potential employees. Kevin, what's your take on Doug's high level comment?

KEVIN CAREY: I think it's good to sort of segment to some extent this question of exploitation, right, which I think does not apply to the large majority of institutions or arts programs, but does apply to a nontrivial number of them, right? And, you know, I've written about like Academy of Art University, which is a for-profit university in San Francisco. I wrote a long thing about them a few years ago, again, just based on these data, that it's just very hard to defend kind of what these numbers look like, program by program. But it's not only for-profit. You look at some of the numbers, like Savannah College of Art and Design, which is like technically a nonprofit university, but my understanding is that it's essentially it's a for-profit family-owned business, where a lot of the money flows through the university to a bunch of for-profit companies in the background that are owned by like the niece of the woman who ran it. And then it's just, you know, some programs that are graduate programs that are at like very well known institutions.

Exploitation is built on trust. Exploitation requires trust to work. You know, all higher education sits on, I think, really remarkably deep kind of and durable foundation of trust. People make decisions of their own free will to like borrow this money and go on these programs because they feel good about the institutions they're getting into a relationship with. They don't have that kind of part of your brain that's like, am I being ripped off here? Is this a good idea. They've been taught to turn it off, because these are, you know... They're basically being asked to trust a well known college and university and the government at the same time. Well, surely the government wouldn't lend me this money, and surely the institution wouldn't admit me to this program is this wasn't on some level a good idea. And that's just not always true. And I think...

And I also think that there's an attractiveness to a career in the arts that probably resonates with people, or a career as a writer that resonates with people in a way that a career as an actuary or something does not. And again, that creates opportunities for exploitation. So that to me, I'm not kind of a hardliner when it comes to government regulation of that stuff. I really want to use these numbers to kind of crackdown on these programs and cut them off from federal financial aid. But I do still think that leaves like probably most of the corpus of arts education again, which I painted too broad a brush of before, where you have this sort of like larger question of all things that Doug talked about, you know, the nature of the labor market, and how much training costs.

Like, again, like someone who's never been involved in this, I completely believe that it's got to be more expensive and more labor intensive to do a good job training people in the arts than it is for probably a lot of other things that happen. And you have to have relationship of people who are, you know, both creatively and pedagogically like very adept, and that you can't just like spin up some sort of system that, you know, whereas like coding is probably a good example of this where you can just kind of get people on the other side for some like reasonable amount of money.

But like that doesn't change the numbers, right? Like you still have to pay tuition, you still have to pay your loan back, right? And so that... And so that, again, just leaves me wondering whether or not we should find some kind of system that could be maybe like university-affiliated, but just running on... It's like the homogeneity of pricing is a big problem. Like you're a grad program, like this is what we charge for grad students. It doesn't matter if you're here, here, here, it's the same price. So that's a big constraint for solving this problem, if that's the case.

DOUG LEDERMAN: I'm assuming that a lot of the cost to institutions and then the price that's passed on to students in arts, I'm picturing, you know, the one-on-one teaching of musicians, and I submit it's similar in some of the other arts fields that I'm less familiar with, etc. But so like could there be way of,

either within institutions, or we talked briefly about the apprenticeship model, but of bringing down the cost of certain kinds of arts education, or are we sort of stuck with it?

DOUG DEMPSTER: Well, let me... Kevin was kind enough to acknowledge, and you, Doug, the high cost of delivering arts education. So I'm going to, since I'm no longer dean, I can now say things that will get me trouble with my colleagues. Yes, there are lots of ways that we could improve the efficiency and the cost of education, even in traditional art forms, never mind more current forms of, called digital arts.

I've written elsewhere about how wedded we are to what, probably inappropriately now, we used to call the master-apprentice model of instruction, which was one-on-one tutorials. And that's most evident in music instruction. And certainly at the most advanced level, and this is true in almost every discipline if you're doing a PhD in the humanities or in physics, or mathematics, you're working on a master-apprentice level when you get to a certain level of mastery. But the arts are wedded to that pedagogy almost at every level, and that's how the stats go, and Kevin's written on this a lot.

Our disciplines have been very resistant to the ways that technologies might allow us to deliver the education more affordably, more efficiently, which actually improves access, right? That's all about opening the door to more students who can't afford the highest costs of the education. So we need do a lot. Everyone knows that COVID has done more to more arts pedagogy in the direction that we've struggling to achieve for probably 25 to 30 years than almost anything that any dean as ever said or Ken Carey has ever written about the need to do this. So that's a silver lining in that cause.

I just want to circle back to a few things Kevin said. He's absolutely right about trust. And, of course, trust can be abused, both in the nonprofit and the for-profit sector he mentioned as some cases there. But I know of some for-profit art schools that seem to be fairly conscientious about the way they deliver education. So I don't want to condemn that whole sector. And, of course, public universities, and, Kevin, others have mentioned this, especially in the master's degree level, have taken advantage of the liberal lending policies. And so I think there's plenty of blame and reforms that needs to go around.

I will mention something that hasn't come up yet. But the talk about journalism and the arts, I think we suffer from a not unique but a distinctive problem in the labor market, because these are fields that some labor economists would describe as winner-take-all labor markets, where there are some very small percentage of celebrities within the professional field that tend to reap huge rewards from the labor market. And that's contingent on them having survived, and Kevin used this term, a tournament in which they rise to the top of that rewards structure. And virtually everyone else within that tournament

is left with too little.

When it comes to teacher education, you don't see the same abuses or gigantic debt-to-earnings problems. That's because those are professions that aren't wage tournaments, aren't winner take all labor markets.

And so what motivates a lot of students into art fields, and I think that's true in the arts, and maybe journalism as well is the chance at celebrity or great achievement, winning that tournament. and the educational program tends to play into that what I call a Hoops Dream syndrome, which is it's a farm system for sifting out the winners of the tournament. But we don't always have good solutions for those who are losers in that tournament. We're not always preparing them as well as we should.

So we need to be focusing more on students across the spectrum. The tournament's not going to go away, because the larger economy and culture wants to reward those people. But we have to have career outcomes, and as Kevin says, they have to be able to earn enough in their profession to at least recover the cost of their education, not just their debt, but actually the cost of investing in that education. And that's an obligation of the schools.

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DOUG LEDERMAN: Joining me for this discussion are Kevin Carey, the vice president for education policy and knowledge management at New America, and Doug Dempster, former dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas at Austin.

I'd love to widen the lens a bit for a minute about the appropriateness, the sufficiency of judging the validity of credentials and educations broadly on economic outcomes. Part of the reason we do that is because there are gettable data on that and because we know most students go to college for career advancement. But especially when we're talking about fields that aren't purely about career preparation, where there aren't licensure exams to pass as another gateway. How important is it that we now have these data and can use them to judge the programs? And what else should be using to judge the value of any kind of credential or piece of training?

KEVIN CAREY: I will say in response to Doug's, I think, correct observation about the difference between a tournament profession and a nontournament profession. Some colleges have been experimenting with trying to exploit the nontournament professions too. You can borrow \$100,000 to get a master's degree in social work if you so choose. But by and large, yes you are correct, absolutely. And, no, the tournament's not going away. It could never go away. Like I love the theater, I'm a real consumer of the theater. I live in Washington, DC, which has a great theater, you know, one of the probably five or six cities in the United States that can really sustain a theater ecosystem. You know, some actors are better than others. And they try to get a lot of the roles. I'm pretty sure they're just making a middle class income by doing that, right? Like, that's all that they're getting to. That's just the nature of things. We can't get rid of that. So given that, it really is about risk, I think.

And to Doug's question about to the extent to which we can judge academic programs based on money, well, of course, not fully for lots of reasons. But the judgment here is in relation to debt, and debt is only about money. If, as has to be the case, a lot of people are going to say, I'm going to enter the arts tournament or the writing tournament, understanding that most people don't win. That's fine. That's the way it's going to be, and you can make that decision. And if it doesn't work out for you, maybe you find another place yourself in the industry that isn't purely predicated on your creative talents. Or maybe you do something else with your life. You know, I don't think we can or should change that.

The question is, can we reduce the risk of that? Can we reduce the negative outcome of losing? And I think that's the been the change, right, that if the risk was you walk away penniless, that's one thing. The problem is you walk away penniless and owing someone \$100,000. That's a lot worse of a risk. If we can find a way to follow some of the advice about bringing down the cost, whether it's through organizational changes or technology or what have you, like not only would that be a more fair and humane and better way of organizing things, more people could enter the tournament that way, right?

I do think there will be backlash. I do think to some extent the market starts to assert itself. We've seen that in other professions, like law, for example, right, where people, at some point, like fewer people just said, I'm not going to borrow \$250,000 to go to law school. That's just a financially crazy decision. What it means is that only people that right now increasingly you can only enter the tournament if you don't have the risk because you have your part of the upper strata of society where your parents can pay for grad school, or they can kind of help you out, or if you can pay your loans back, they can pay your rent, etc., etc. You know, like which is bad for batches of people and bad for the arts. I do think if we could find a better way, it would be better for everyone.

DOUG DEMPSTER: Doug, I'm going to come back to your question, but I have to agree with Kevin first, especially the last point. We know that we have an educational finance system which is broken in various aspects and it needs to be corrected there. And I think there is a lot we can do to fix that, and there are burdens to be spread around. Colleges, universities have to do their part, controlling cost is one of the first priorities.

But as we try to fix this, we want to avoid creating another problem. So the liberal lending programs we have now were designed to create greater access to a greater spectrum of our society, and this is especially evident in the arts. There was a time, and in some ways it's still true, that the most elite programs are most available to the most affluent. and if you look at the demographics for those schools, it's clear that there's not equal access for those who deserve or have the talent.

You talked about how these new data might be just by becoming more available correcting some of these problems, you can see that happening already. Baylor just got called out by the Wall Street Journal in a way that you can bet is going to have a dramatic effect on their practices. And I've been saying to my colleagues in the arts around the country, every dean, every president on an arts school had better understand what the ROIs are on their not just school but program by program, because their students and their prospective students are all going to know that if they take the trouble to find out. That's going to in and of itself have a corrective effect.

What I'm also arguing for, and this is the mission of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, of which I'm the president of that board and have been working with that program for 15 years, is that we're saying let's not reduce that entirety of evaluation these programs or informing a prospective student and current students and graduates simply by those two numbers--cost to earnings ratios. We want a much thicker appreciation of what these programs are or are not delivering to students and graduates. That program, SNAAP, was created as a collective effort of some private foundations, including the Surdna Foundation and the arts schools themselves, to say we need a much better instrument for evaluating outcomes for our graduates. And it's a very thick dataset, which is a corrective, I think, balances the picture that's being produced by some of these very good, very important, but very reductive evaluations of programs that really are just looking at debt-to-earnings or cost-to-earnings ratios.

And I'm sure Kevin and you would both agree that we don't want to be so reductive that we're not looking at graduate satisfaction, professional activity, what percentage of graduates are actually working in their professions, and lots of other data points.

DOUG LEDERMAN: There's been a major failure on the part of higher education leaders in terms of having not said, here's what we strive to produce in and for graduates of our programs. Here are the ways we should be judged, and here's the data, probably some more quantitative than others, that show how successfully we're doing that. That failure as resulted in a vacuum into which we've seen some oversimplified, reductionist measures put forward as THE way of judging programs. It seems like those economic assessments need to remain central, if not dominate, in how we think about these programs for the reasons Kevin cites. But it seems like having more context and more data could only be better. Kevin, do you think broader ways of judging programs are a distraction from what really matters, or would they be a helpful addition?

KEVIN CAREY: We're sitting here, I think, on October 21st, 2021, just learning that the Biden Administration's proposal to make community college free is about to collapse in Congress. And, you know, why is higher education falling short in this terrible contest for, you know vital investments? Because on some level, the pitch is always give us more money, but we're not going to tell you what will happen. You need to kind of trust us, again, getting back to this issue of trust. The kind of push for administrative definitions of quality have had a consumer protection impetus behind them, but it's also filling a void where there are no real, kind of reliable, comparable, checkable processes, measures, however you want to define it. And of course, the way you define it would be vastly different for different kinds of education.

My approach is always, whatever you think, like, whatever the field thinks is the right way to look at the quality or value of an arts education, I am like very open to considering all those things. You just don't really see that much if you kind of go and look for it, because for a variety of reasons it just sort of hasn't been produced, and I think any process with integrity would create information that would make some people uncomfortable and make other people like less so. But absent that, I just think there's this kind of degrading bargain of continue to fund us even though we're not going to really be very responsive about the results of that.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Kevin Carey and Doug Dempster certainly come at the issues we just discussed from very different vantage points, as you might expect for an accountability-focused researcher and writer, and a long-time arts dean and professor. But I have to say I was struck by how much more they agreed than disagreed about the growing for colleges to document and prove the value of their academic programs and the desirability of a broader rather than narrower definition of what constitutes value. The sooner we can get past the debate about whether colleges should be held responsible for how graduates fare after they leave and focus on coming to agreement on how to make that judgment, the better off higher education and students will be.

That's all for this episode of The Key. Thanks to Kevin Carey and Doug Dempster for being with us today, and to Formstack for making this episode possible. I'm Doug Lederman, and until next week, stay well and stay safe.

[MUSIC]