HEADING THE WRONG WAY

Six reasons why college degrees are more expensive, elusive

1. DEEPEST CUTS IN THE NATION

On a per student basis, Louisiana has cut its support of higher education by more than any other state in the country since 2008, when Gov. Bobby Jindal took office.

2. LAGGING BEHIND

As of 2014, Louisiana ranks 48th in educational attainment, as defined by the percentage of adults who have either an associate or a bachelor's degree.

3. SKYROCKETING TUITION AND FEES

The cost of tuition and fees at Louisiana's public universities has risen faster—by far—than in any other state since 2010. The typical state's cost of attendance has gone up by 13 percent; Louisiana's has gone up by an average of 52 percent.

4. FUNDING THE STUDENT

Louisiana's merit-based TOPS program covers 100 percent of tuition for eligible students. As state aid to schools has been slashed, tuition has skyrocketed—and so has the cost of TOPS. Now, TOPS takes up an ever-greater portion of the money put into higher ed.

5. HELPING THE WEALTHY

Data show that TOPS recipients tend to come from wealthier families, a trend that is growing more pronounced over time.

6. AID FOR NEEDY STAGNATES

As the costs of funding TOPS have shot up, thanks to tuition increases, state funding for the need-based Go Grant program has, at about $25 million a year.