



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Chairman
Education and Workforce Committee
“The Future of College: Harnessing Innovation to Improve Outcomes
and Lower Costs”
November 18, 2025

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning and welcome to today’s Committee on Education and Workforce hearing. I want to thank our witnesses for joining us as we examine how innovation in higher education can expand opportunity, improve student outcomes, and make college more affordable.

The need for innovation is clear. Across our higher education system, only about 61 percent of first-time students earn a degree within six years—and completion rates are even lower for non-traditional and part-time learners. As a result, nearly 42 million Americans have attended college but left without earning a credential. This “some college, no credential” population underscores a critical gap in our education system: too many students invest time and money in higher education without ever seeing the return they deserve.

At the same time, a divide persists between how educators and graduates view workforce readiness. Nearly nine in ten educators believe their students are ready for the workplace, yet only half of recent graduates feel prepared for entry-level roles, and just one in three believe their education was worth the cost.

Meanwhile, the profile of the “typical” college student has changed. Today, most students are non-traditional—working adults, parents, caregivers, and veterans—whose needs and schedules look very different from an 18-year-old living on campus. Colleges also face demographic and economic challenges: a looming “enrollment cliff” is projected to shrink the pool of new high school graduates entering college by about 13 percent between 2025 and 2041. And more young Americans are opting out of college altogether: just 62.8 percent of 2024 high school graduates enrolled in college immediately after graduation, down four percentage points from 2019.

These realities demand new technologies, new models, and a new mindset to ensure higher education truly meets the needs of students and families. Fortunately, innovation is not a distant goal—it’s happening right now, reshaping how students access, afford, and complete college. Artificial intelligence, or AI, for example, is transforming learning and operations. Students and faculty are using AI to brainstorm ideas, tutor, design coursework, and streamline feedback. Institutions are automating administrative workflows to reduce costs and improve service.

High-quality online and hybrid classes are making college more accessible for working adults, parents, and veterans who need flexibility. Colleges are collaborating through course-sharing partnerships, ensuring students can take required courses from another college—even if they’re not offered at their home institution.

Partnerships between colleges and job creators are also driving innovation—ensuring programs align with workforce needs and preparing students for the jobs of tomorrow.

The Trump administration is helping accelerate this progress by prioritizing AI literacy and directing competitive grants toward AI implementation in higher education—reflecting a commitment to modernizing our higher education system and ensuring innovation leads to real results for learners.

Today's panel represents that commitment. We are joined by leaders from across the higher education landscape who are driving innovation and helping shape the future of learning.

I look forward to their testimony and to today's important discussion. With that, I yield to the Ranking Member.