



ECONOMIC RESEARCH INDIVIDUAL

(155)

REGIONAL 2026

PRELIMINARY

Judge Key

TOPIC

How important is earning a college degree in 2026? As financial costs (tuition, room & board, interest rates) rise for post-secondary education, and considering the economic costs of attending a 4-year college or university, should qualifying students be encouraged to earn a bachelor's degree?

In your response, consider:

- The economic costs of earning a college degree
- Potential Financial debt from earning a degree
- Employment opportunities for degreed and non-degreed candidates in the labor market
- Positive externalities of a college educated community
- Future earning potential for degree and non-degreed candidates
- Theory of creative destruction on career prospects for degreed and non-degreed candidates

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. **Formulate Questions:** As a team of judges, create two to three questions to ask at the end of each presentation. *Make sure to ask the same questions to every team.* Potential questions are listed below.
2. **Presentation Details:**
 - **Setup Time:** Contestants have up to 3 minutes to set up.
 - **Presentation Time:** Contestants have up to seven (7) minutes to present, followed by up to five (5) minutes for judges' questions.
 - **Completion:** Excuse the contestant after the judges' questions are finished.
3. **Judging Rules:**
 - **No Ties:** There can be no ties in the top 10 contestants. Judges are responsible for breaking any ties.
 - **Ranking:** The administrator will fill out the ranking sheet before dismissing the judges.
4. **Scoring:**
 - Individual scores are not to be given to students.
 - Only general statements are to be shared.
 - Contestants are not allowed to ask questions.
 - Please share your comments directly online. Contestants will see these comments which will help prepare them for future competitions.
5. **Post-Presentation:**
 - **Materials:** Give any contest materials to the administrator.
 - **Audience:** No audience is allowed in the contest room.

POTENTIAL JUDGE'S QUESTIONS

1. What surprised you most during your research process?
2. If you had more time, what additional research or data would you have liked to include?
3. What was the most challenging part of narrowing down your topic and focus?

FINAL STEPS. Double-check and verify all scores.