

LETTER: College education prepares students for workforce and life

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York College President Pamela Gunter-Smith (Photo: ycp.edu)

The question of ROI for a college education is not a new one to pose. It has always been part of the consideration for college going students and their parents. The York Dispatch's Jan. 7 editorial about the crisis in education renews these talks, and frankly it's one college administrators should welcome, rather than one that frightens us to the core. A quick look at the numbers demonstrates that the perceived crisis is not what it seems.

A report issued in November 2019 by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce examines the return-on-investment of a college degree for more than 4,500 institutions. The average private college graduate can expect to see an economic gain of \$838,000 over 40 years of earnings. Looking at York College of Pennsylvania specifically, this number rises to \$1,038,000. These figures include the debt burden students take on and yet they still come out ahead.

Speaking of debt, that burden is not \$100,000 as the Dispatch suggests. While six-figure debt levels exist in some cases, they are not the norm. The median debt for a YCP student is less than \$30,000.

YCP believes a high-quality education should be affordable and accessible. As a private institution, our price of \$20,886 falls much lower than our peers, some of whom have imposed tuition freezes or resets, yet still cost more than YCP. Additionally, YCP awards institutional, federal and state merit and need-based funds at an average of \$10,500 — this reduces the burden on families substantially.

We know precisely who our students are and what their expectations entail. ROI must be part of the calculation. But looking at earnings just a few years post-graduation doesn't include the entire equation. The suggestion that a college education is outdated misses the point that college prepares students for life as well as for the workforce.

The future is a knowledge economy. Companies value employees who can learn and adapt to change. That is what YCP delivers: individuals prepared to embrace and help shape the changes ahead.