INTRO: Hello, I’m (first name) and I’m with a market research firm that’s conducting a survey about some important issues in Tennessee. I am not trying to sell you anything. Would you mind spending about 15 minutes answering some questions? Your answers will remain confidential.

S1. Are you currently employed, meaning you work at least 30 hours a week? (screen out those who answer no)

S2. Are you or is a member of your household employed by the Tennessee state government? (screen out those who answer yes)

S3. Do you or does a member of your household work for a university or other institution of higher learning? (screen out those who answer yes)

S4. Are you registered to vote? (screen out those who answer no)

Q1. In general, when thinking about the value of a college education today, would you say that the overall value most college graduates get back over their lifetime is:

1. Worth more than the cost of attending college 31%
2. Worth less than the cost 40%
3. About equal to what they pay for college 21%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA 9%

Q2. In general, how important do you think it is for someone to have a college degree or a career-related certificate beyond a high school diploma? Would you say it is:

1. Very important 42%
2. Somewhat important 44%
3. Not very important 8%
4. Not at all important 4%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 2%

Q3. I’m going to read you some statements about education. For each one, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

Q3A. A college degree or certification beyond high school is essential for getting a good job.

1. Strongly agree 32%
2. Somewhat agree 36%
3. Neither agree nor disagree 10%
4. Somewhat disagree 15%
5. Strongly disagree 8%
6. DK/REFUSED/NA --
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(Repeat prompts as necessary to complete)

Q3B. A college degree or certification beyond high school leads to a higher income.

1. Strongly agree 40%
2. Somewhat agree 33%
3. Neither agree nor disagree 13%
4. Somewhat disagree 9%
5. Strongly disagree 5%
6. DK/REFUSED/NA 1%

Q4. How about you? What is the highest level of education that you completed?
[Read categories as necessary]

1. Less than high school 1%
2. High school 16%
3. Some college 23%
4. Associate degree or certificate 16%
5. College degree 31%
6. Postgraduate degree (M.A, LLD, Ph.D.) 14%
7. DK/REFUSED/NA --

Q4A. [Ask if Q4==3] How many semesters did you complete? [Read categories as necessary]

1. 2 semesters or less 30%
2. 3 to 4 semesters 39%
3. 5 or more semesters 26%
4. DK/CAN’T REMEMBER 4%

Q5. [Ask if Q4==3|4|5|6] Do you currently have student loan debt?

1. Yes 27%
2. No 73%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA --

Q6. [Ask if Q4==5|6] How useful would you say your college education has been in preparing you for a job or career? Would you say:

1. Very useful 49%
2. Somewhat useful 31%
3. Not too useful 10%
4. Not at all useful 10%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA --
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Q7. [ASK IF Q4<=3] For each of the following, please tell me whether or not it has been an obstacle to you in completing a college degree. [RANDOMIZE Q7A-Q7F]

Q7A. Family responsibilities

1. Yes 61%
2. No 36%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 3%

Q7B. Job or work responsibilities

1. Yes 60%
2. No 37%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 3%

Q7C. The cost of a degree

1. Yes 62%
2. No 31%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 7%

Q7D. The difficulty of finding classes that fit your schedule

1. Yes 40%
2. No 53%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 7%

Q7E. The time it would take to complete a degree

1. Yes 57%
2. No 39%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 4%

Q7F. The student loan debt you would have to take on

1. Yes 55%
2. No 41%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 4%
Q8. Do you think of your current job as a career, as a steppingstone to a career, or do you think of it as just a job to get you by?

1. A career  61%
2. A steppingstone to a career  15%
3. Just a job to get you by  22%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA  2%

Q9. In general, do you feel you have the education and training necessary to get the kind of job or career you would like to have, or do you need more education and training?

1. Have necessary education and training  68%
2. Need more  27%
3. DON’T KNOW/REFUSED/NA  5%

Q10. [ASK IF Q9=2] If you decided to get more education and training, which of the following would you be most likely to use?

1. A community college  35%
2. A 4-year public college or university  22%
3. A 4-year private college or university  7%
4. A for-profit college or university  1%
5. A technical school  24%
6. Another type of university  6%
7. DK/REFUSED/NA (Do Not Read)  4%

Q11. Do you ever plan to return to school?

1. Yes  19%
2. No  55%
3. Maybe  23%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA  3%

Q12: [ASK IF Q11=1|3] Do you have convenient access to high-speed, broad-band internet?

1. Yes  93%
2. No  5%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA  2%

Q13. [ASK IF Q11=1|3] Would you say you are comfortable enough with technology to take a college-level course entirely online?

1. Yes  90%
2. No  7%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA  3%
Q14. Have you needed to buy new equipment such as a computer, monitor or some other device, in order to continue to work or go to school online during the pandemic?

1. Yes 27%
2. No 72%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 1%

Q15: [ASK IF Q14=1] Did that purchase or purchases create a financial hardship for you?

1. Yes 47%
2. No 51%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA 1%

Thank you. Now we would like to ask you a few general questions about college education in Tennessee.

Q16. In terms of higher education and workforce development, how would you rate the following in terms of what should be the top priorities of Governor Bill Lee’s administration? Would you say they should be a top priority, a middle priority, a low priority, or not a priority at all?

16A. Affordability of college and technical training

1. Top 60%
2. Middle 26%
3. Low 9%
4. Not at all 3%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 2%

16B. Access to college and technical training in rural areas

1. Top 52%
2. Middle 34%
3. Low 9%
4. Not at all 2%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 3%

16C. College readiness

1. Top 46%
2. Middle 37%
3. Low 10%
4. Not at all 3%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 4%
16D. Student debt

1. Top 42%
2. Middle 31%
3. Low 17%
4. Not at all 7%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 3%

16E. Graduation/completion rates

1. Top 49%
2. Middle 35%
3. Low 9%
4. Not at all 3%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 4%

16F. Ability of graduates to succeed in the workplace

1. Top 50%
2. Middle 32%
3. Low 10%
4. Not at all 3%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 4%

Q17. Since taking office, Governor Bill Lee has focused on increasing higher education opportunities in rural areas. Do you agree or disagree with Gov. Lee’s emphasis on increasing higher education opportunities in rural areas?

1. Strongly agree 45%
2. Somewhat agree 33%
3. Neither agree nor disagree 10%
4. Somewhat disagree 4%
5. Strongly disagree 3%
6. DK/REFUSED/NA 5%

Q18. How would you rate the options most people have for attending college in Tennessee? Would you say they are excellent, good, not very good, or poor?

1. Excellent 19%
2. Good 55%
3. Not very good 15%
4. Poor 5%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 6%
Q19. Do you think Tennessee’s state government should increase its funding for college education, keep it about the same, or decrease the amount it spends?

1. Increase 53%
2. Keep it same 35%
3. Decrease 7%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA 5%

Q20. From what you know or understand, do you think Tennessee’s colleges and universities provide adequate financial aid for students who want to obtain a college degree? If you don’t have an opinion, just say so.

1. Yes 39%
2. No 21%
3. No opinion 29%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA 12%

Q21. Do you personally view the problem of student loan debt for people in the United States to be a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem?

1. Major problem 59%
2. Minor problem 28%
3. Not a problem 9%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA 4%

Q22. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: For Tennessee’s economy to compete with other states, it is essential to have an educated workforce. Would you say you:

1. Strongly agree 51%
2. Somewhat agree 38%
3. Somewhat disagree 6%
4. Strongly disagree 2%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 3%

Now I’d like to ask you about online college education.

Q23. Generally speaking, do you think that online college degree programs are better, about the same, or worse than traditional, in-person degree programs?

1. Better 10%
2. About the same 44%
3. Worse 36%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA 10%
Q24. Generally speaking, do you think that employers rate an employee who has received their college degree from an online degree program the same, better, or worse than a similar applicant who has received their degree from a traditional, in-person degree program?

1. The same 41%
2. Better 9%
3. Worse 36%
4. DK/REFUSED/NA 15%

Q25. The nontraditional HOPE scholarship program, funded by our state lottery, provides tuition assistance for qualifying Tennesseans age 25 and older who are returning to college or enrolling for the first time. It is available for those attending two- and four-year colleges in Tennessee, and can be used to pursue degrees through online programs at those schools.

Some people argue that these HOPE scholarships should be available for students enrolled at other state-approved online universities. Would you say you:

1. Strongly agree 30%
2. Somewhat agree 39%
3. Somewhat disagree 12%
4. Strongly disagree 11%
5. DK/REFUSED/NA 8%

*We’re almost done. The final questions are for statistical purposes.*

GENDER. (BY OBSERVATION)

1. Male 45%
2. Female 55%

D1. REGION

Do you live in East, Middle or West Tennessee?

1. West Tennessee 25%
2. Middle Tennessee 37%
3. East Tennessee 39%

D2. AGE

1. 18–34 26%
2. 35–44 24%
3. 45–64 42%
4. 65+ 7%
D3. RACE

What is your race or ethnic group?

1. White/Anglo  76%
2. African-American  13%
3. Hispanic/Other  7%
4. Declined  4%

D4. These days, many colleges and universities offer courses online. Have you ever taken a course online?

1. Yes  48%
2. No  51%
3. DK/REFUSED/NA  1%