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Dispatch №3 — we made the receipts public

From the desk. This week we didn't run a new number. We gave away all of them.

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For two months we've said the same thing in this dispatch: the math that decides the next thirty years of a teenager's financial life is scattered across six federal websites, three private datasets, and one spreadsheet from 2021 you have to already know exists to find. The brochure counts on you not assembling it.

So we assembled it. And this week we stopped keeping it.

Every number behind LE TEEN — the 30-year net present value of **3,392 U.S. colleges**, the return on investment for all **19 bachelor's major categories**, the out-of-state cost premium for **455 public universities**, and a per-field measure of how much of each major's work today's AI is *observed reaching for* — is now a single, clean, **open dataset**. Downloadable. Machine-readable. Free to cite. It has a DOI, the same permanent identifier a peer-reviewed paper carries, so a journalist or a researcher or a curious 17-year-old can point at it and it will still be there in ten years.

We didn't paywall it. We didn't gate it behind an email. We put it on the same shelves the researchers use — Zenodo (where it got the DOI), Hugging Face, and Kaggle — under a CC BY 4.0 license, which in plain English means: **take it, build on it, quote a figure, all we ask is a link back.**

Why give away the ammunition

Because the fight was never about hoarding the numbers. It was about the fact that only one side had them.

The college-pricing market runs on an information gap. A school knows exactly what its graduates earn and exactly what its degree costs to finance; a 17-year-old, standing on the campus tour, knows the dorm has a smoothie bar. The whole apparatus — the glossy mailer, the "what's your dream school" intake form, the aid letter engineered to be un-comparable to the one from the school down the road — depends on you never running the numbers, because nobody runs the numbers, because the numbers weren't yours.

Now they're yours.

Here's what's in them, so you know what you're holding:

- Pick a major and your **mean lifetime ROI swings by about $1.24 million** — from Engineering at **+$1,132,553** down to Philosophy & Religious Studies at **−$111,915** — cohort-weighted across every bachelor's program, using FREOPP's own published figures, not ours. Same tuition, same four years. The major is the biggest number on the page.
- In several popular fields the average hides the story: the *majority* of graduates never break even — they'd have more money at 40 having skipped the degree and the debt. That's not an argument against the field. It's the base rate nobody prints on the brochure.
- Crossing a state line into a top public flagship can cost up to **$1.42 million** over thirty years — non-resident versus resident, present-value — and it *still pays off both ways*. The residency line is just the most underpriced number on the tour.

Every one of those is a row you can now open in a spreadsheet yourself.

What this doesn't do

It doesn't do the math *for your exact case*. A dataset is the raw material; your decision turns on your specific major, your specific school, your specific aid package and expected debt. That's what the free calculator is for — twenty seconds, no signup. The methodology shows every assumption in the model, and the dataset shows every number under it. Nothing is scraped, modeled behind closed doors, or vibes.

The brochure has a marketing budget. You now have a citable dataset with a DOI.

Run the numbers before someone runs them on you.

Sources: FREOPP higher-ed ROI (2021, CC BY 4.0); NCES IPEDS 2023-24; BEA Regional Price Parities 2023. The full LE TEEN dataset: DOI 10.5281/zenodo.21351602, CC BY 4.0.
