



# Bundled Value: Working Learners’ Perceptions of Tuition Benefit Programs

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### STUDY OVERVIEW

**Purpose:** Explore the perceived value associated with tuition assistance programs

**Sample:** 6,726 current or past tuition benefit participants at three Fortune 1000 companies

**Methodology:** Online survey with closed- and open-ended questions regarding perceived value

### Turning Your Tuition Assistance Program into a Strategic Asset

Organizations commonly offer tuition assistance to employees to develop a strong, capable workforce. Many employers seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their workforce development initiatives, but have little insight into how workers view their company’s tuition assistance programs. What value do employees and prospective employees attach to these programs? Finding the answer to this question may help you:

- better promote tuition assistance programs to current and prospective employees
- improve participation rates
- increase the strategic value of this benefit in recruiting and retaining a capable workforce.

### The Challenge for Employers

To stay competitive amid the global rise of knowledge-based industries, American organizations need a skilled, highly educated workforce.

Many organizations offer educational assistance to attract, develop, and retain capable employees, but few measure whether workers perceive tuition benefits to be personally or professionally valuable. This descriptive study solicited working learners’ perceptions of their employers’ tuition benefit programs to determine which themes of potential worth these workers valued most highly.

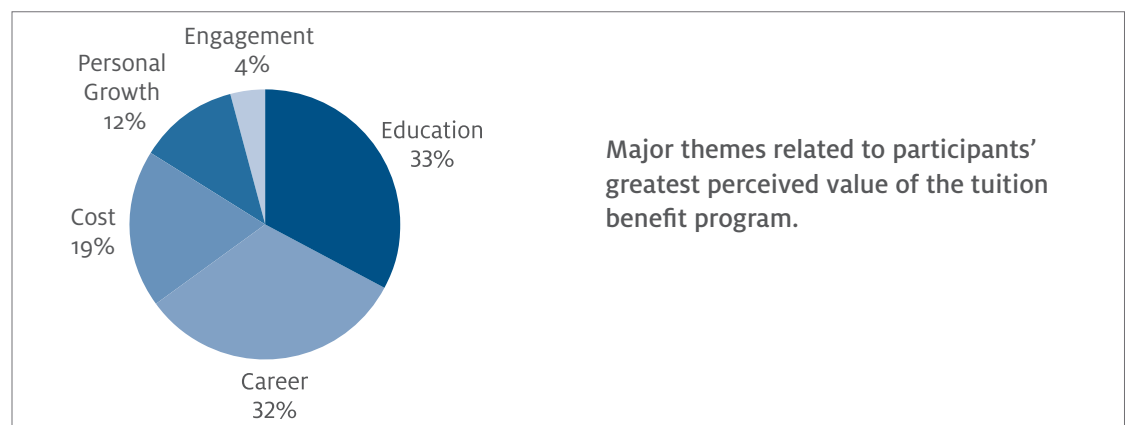
### Methodology

Survey responses from **6,726 current and past tuition benefit program participants at three Fortune 1000 companies** were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed to understand perceived value. Data were collected using an online survey featuring demographic questions, open-ended queries, and a perceived value scale derived from previously published articles about tuition benefits.

### Results

- More than 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with 9 of 11 statements describing perceived value of the tuition benefit program. **Respondents agreed most strongly with value statements related to general personal development and better career opportunities; they agreed least**

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**Major themes related to participants’ greatest perceived value of the tuition benefit program.**



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**with value statements related to company recruitment and retention**—for example, statements that said tuition reimbursement is a primary reason for staying with a company.

- Results indicated value perceptions are multi-dimensional. **Five primary themes of perceived value emerged:** education (33%), career (32%), cost (19%), personal growth (12%), and engagement with work (4%).
  - Themes that emerged in the qualitative results suggest the perceived value of tuition benefit programs is complex and difficult to capture through closed-ended statements. **Employers' general assumptions about perceived value of tuition benefit programs may be incomplete.** Tuition assistance is **a benefit that touches upon many different aspects of an employee's life and goals.** Employers who offer this multifaceted benefit may be under-selling it.
- Leverage your tuition benefit program as a strategic tool in maintaining a capable workforce and recruiting strong job candidates.
  - To make tuition benefit programs more visible and encourage more participation, **emphasize the variety of perceived values people associate with tuition assistance**—from personal values such as educational achievement and a sense of accomplishment to practical values such as completing a degree without incurring excessive debt.
  - Encourage employees to investigate tuition benefit program options on their own, so they can discover the benefits of participating that mean the most to them.
  - Assess the perceived value of tuition assistance program among your own employees to maximize the effectiveness of your company's program.

### Request the Full Report:

To request a copy of **Bundled Value: Working Learners' Perceptions of Tuition Benefit Programs**, by Leslie A. Miller, Ph.D., PHR, Debbie Ritter-Williams, Ph.D., and Ruby A. Rouse, Ph.D., contact the University of Phoenix Research Institute at [institute@phoenix.edu](mailto:institute@phoenix.edu).

### Next Steps for Employers

**The takeaway:** Employees derive a wide variety of advantages from participation in tuition assistance programs: increased earning potential, personal achievement, greater knowledge in their field, increased marketability, opportunities for advancement, and more. **To gain more strategic value out of their tuition assistance programs, employers should recognize the many perceived values people associate with tuition benefits and use this knowledge to better position their programs and promote participation.** Demonstrating the full worth of tuition assistance is a crucial step in preparing the workforce for the challenges of the 21st century.

*Affiliated with one of the largest providers of higher education for working adults, the University of Phoenix Research Institute conducts scholarly research on working learners, higher education, and industry to improve academic outcomes and promote a more prepared workforce.*