

Influencer-Driven Campaign Reaches Over 1.25 Million, Reframes the Value of College for a New Generation

College Is Worth It 2 builds on national strategy to boost FAFSA completion and reconnect with students through authentic digital storytelling

WASHINGTON, D.C., DC, UNITED STATES, May 13, 2025

/EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) today released a case study of the results from year two of College Is Worth It (CIWI), a national marketing campaign designed to reframe the conversation around the value of a college degree.

Launched in Fall 2024 in partnership with strategy and communications agency Good Rebellion, CIWI 2 flipped the script on traditional higher ed outreach, replacing slogans and stats with real stories shared by real people. The campaign centered on influencer-led, short-form video content across TikTok and Instagram, aimed directly at students, recent grads, and parents navigating college decisions and financial aid.

As part of the national FAFSA Student Support Strategy, the campaign had a clear, action-oriented focus: encourage FAFSA completion and make higher education feel personal, accessible, and worth it.

By the Numbers:

- 972,214 total video plays
- 769,222 engagements
- 98,123 link clicks
- Average cost per link click: \$0.18 (significantly below Meta industry benchmarks of \$1.00 - \$1.85 per click)



□ Total reach: 1.25 million unique users

“Students are online, they’re on their phones, and they’re looking for voices they can trust,” said Jessica Todtman, Interim President and COO of NASH. “CIWI 2 leaned into that reality—and it worked. In a world where the narrative around higher ed is increasingly polarized, we saw real traction from content that was authentic, peer-led, and focused on real-life college and financial aid experiences.”

CIWI 2 wasn’t just about raising awareness, it was about driving real, measurable action. The campaign focused on four core goals:

- Reaffirm the value of a college degree, both personally and professionally, through relatable storytelling. National personalities like Mario Lopez and Netflix’s Gabi Butler brought both authenticity and reach to the campaign.
- Drive FAFSA completion among high school students and recent graduates by demystifying the process and making financial aid feel attainable.
- Support parents with authentic, peer-led messaging that makes college more understandable and accessible.
- Reach students where they are—on platforms they actually use—with content they want to watch and share.

This mission-driven structure helped shape every influencer brief, ad placement, and video script, ensuring that the campaign didn’t just talk about impact but inspired it.

The campaign embraced a grassroots approach to digital marketing, built on trust, relevance, and precision. In a divergence from traditional advocacy efforts across higher education, CIWI 2 strategic tactics included:

- Student and parent influencer storytelling, with creators sharing short, unscripted experiences about college, FAFSA, and affordability across TikTok and Instagram.
- Paid media amplification, repurposing top-performing videos into targeted Meta Ads to reach broader audiences.
- Tailored content by audience, with messaging segmented for high schoolers, recent grads, and parents, each receiving content that reflected their real questions and needs.
- Clear calls to action, like “File your FAFSA now,” made each video not just inspirational but actionable.

This layered strategy helped ensure the campaign struck the right tone while delivering impressive performance and engagement.

“This campaign showed that when we shift from speaking at students to speaking with them, they respond,” said David Belsky, Chief Communications Advisor at NASH and Founder of Good Rebellion. “NASH was successfully able to leverage students and parents talking about their

experiences—authentic stories that made college feel real and achievable.”

The results of CIWI 2 point to a new model for student engagement, one that blends influencer credibility with smart targeting and action-driven messaging. The case study recommends expanding future efforts by:

- Including more diverse voices (first-gen, bilingual, nontraditional students)
- Inviting system-level partners to localize and extend impact
- Tracking deeper metrics around FAFSA completion and enrollment conversion

View the campaign content at collegeisworthit.info. The full CIWI 2 report can be accessed below.

About NASH

Founded in 1979, the National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) works to advance the role of multi-campus systems and the concept of systemness to create a more vibrant and sustainable higher education sector. NASH systems include over 700 campuses and serve more than 8.2 million students nationwide. Learn more at www.nash.edu.

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