

Tue, 03/26/2013 - 3:15pm [Behind The News](#)

Out in Four or the School Pays for More

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[University Business, April 2013](#)

It used to be that when a student left high school and entered college, he or she could expect to graduate four years later. But the pressures of jobs (to support rising education costs) and the demands of family have increased time spent in school so much that a Time magazine article earlier this year focused on “The Myth of the Four-Year College Degree.”



According to the Department of Education, fewer than 40 percent of students who enter college each year graduate within four years, while National Student Clearinghouse Research Center reports that just over 54 percent of students graduate in six years.

But a growing number of schools are committing to the idea of four-year degrees. Not only are they providing resources through dedicated advising and ensuring course availability, but some truly put their money where their mouth is.

For example, Alma College, a private liberal arts college in Michigan, helps students plan courses effectively so they graduate on time. If they follow the path but don't graduate in four years, Alma will pay their tuition for an additional term.

The Nebraska Wesleyan Graduation Commitment also ensures that students who satisfy the requirements will graduate in four years. If not, the university will pay for the cost of completing the degree.

Other schools offering similar plans include Concordia University (Neb.), Juniata College (Pa.), Vanguard University (Calif.), and Texas Tech University, among others.

For the most part, the schools' money is safe and sound. The payoff is, on average for these schools, four-year graduation rates in the 80 and 90 percent range.