

Student debt a rising burden in U.S.

By Janet Lorin, Bloomberg

In terms of American exceptionalism, student loan debt stands out. No other country imposes the kind of costs on college and university students that the U.S. does, and nowhere else do loans cover so much of those costs.

Experts think the \$1.2 trillion in outstanding education debt in the U.S. is more than that of the rest of the world combined. It's a situation that educators, consumer advocates and members of both political parties all decry. Agreement on solutions is harder to find.

In the meantime, the level of student loans is increasingly seen not just as a burden on students, but as a drag on the nation's economy. Young adults are delaying setting up their own households in the face of a mountain of debt while default rates rise to dangerous levels. Recent studies also show a growing economic divergence between young Americans with and without student loans.

There's widespread agreement as to who is worst off: college dropouts. They're stuck with debt, but without the higher earnings a degree might have brought to help pay it off.

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