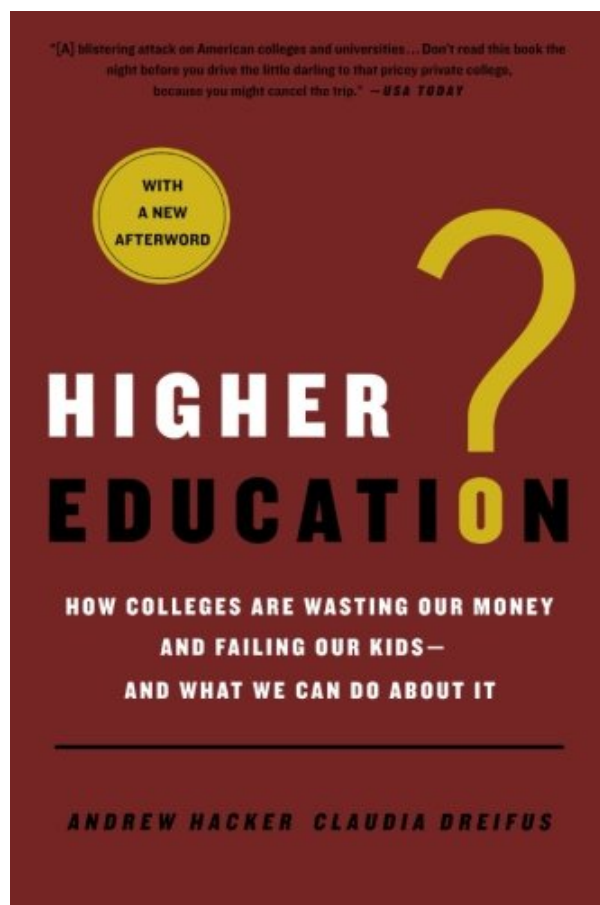


HIGHER EDUCATION?: HOW COLLEGES ARE WASTING OUR MONEY AND FAILING OUR KIDS---AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT BY ANDREW HACKER, CLAUDIA DREIFU



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WITH
A NEW
AFTERWORD

HIGHER EDUCATION?

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A quarter of a million dollars. It's the going tab for four years at most top-tier colleges. Why does it cost so much and is it worth it?

In this provocative investigation, the renowned sociologist Andrew Hacker and New York Times writer Claudia Dreifus make an incisive case that the American way of higher education?now a \$420 billion-per-year business?has lost sight of its primary mission: the education of our young people. They probe the true performance of the Ivy League, the baleful influence of tenure, an unhealthy reliance on part-time teachers, and supersized bureaucracies which now have lives of their own.

Hacker and Dreifus take readers from Princeton and Harvard to Evergreen State, revealing those institutions that need to adjust their priorities and others that are getting it right, proving that learning can be achieved?and at a much more reasonable price. Higher Education? is a wake-up call and a call to arms.

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Excellent in some sections, simplistic in others

By Richard B. Schwartz

This is an interesting, opinionated, anecdotal study of the current plight of our colleges and universities. I agree with about 80% of it, but disagree with some of its crucial elements. Education is indeed too expensive and far too much of its budget goes to `amenities' like luxury dorms, exercise facilities with rock climbing

walls, professionalized athletics, and so on. The `top' institutions are not always providing value for dollar while many public, regional, and little-known institutions are.

The criticism, however, comes with a very broad brush. I would not, e.g., do away with tenure, because tenure is a form of compensation and salaries would probably be higher without it, so the efficiencies sought might not be recouped. I agree with the authors that tenure is largely unnecessary for protecting academic freedom; meanwhile, the contingent faculty's academic freedom is not being protected in that manner, since they're not on the tenure track. Tenure, however, helps protect faculty from their colleagues. For example, when I was deaning I once had a department chair try to force a senior colleague into early retirement. Why? Because he graded too rigorously and was (the chair claimed) hurting the feelings of his students. When two of us (another dean and I) looked at examples we were heartened to learn that the senior faculty member in question was grading accurately, fairly and in a helpful (i.e. an honest) manner. The department wanted somebody more soft, more politically correct, more touchy/feely. The presence of tenure also protects disciplines from corporatist deans and senior administrators. In the current, commercialized university (which I deplore along with the authors) there are many administrators who would quickly dissolve Classics departments, e.g., and put something vocational in their place. Once a few of those events occurred, students would stop studying Classics at the graduate level. There is continuing student interest in Classics but a sudden blip in enrollments is all that a corporatist administrator would need to take out the long knife. Tenure helps us in this regard and protects education (as opposed to training).

The authors also inveigh against research. There is no question that much `research' is white noise, but the answer is not to say (as the authors do), that `if a faculty member wants to write a book he can do it on the weekends.' Check out Jonathan Cole's book defending research universities and specifying all of the inventions, medicines and procedures that originated there. We all have moments of frustration with trivial research and inactive `researchers', but that should not lead us to damn all research, across the board. Also, one of the principal features of our higher education institutions is that one size does not fit all. There is a place for research institutions and students there can have very special experiences.

One of the huge failings of contemporary higher education is the erosion of general education and the teaching of core curricula (if at all) through the use of adjuncts and graduate assistants. At many of our institutions (especially those at the `top') students can graduate without studying crucial areas of human experience while remaining ignorant of fundamental human knowledge. I am surprised that the authors did not spend much more time on this issue.

The book is strong in its facts, its statistics and in its anecdotes. I love anecdotes in general and I love many of the authors' anecdotes in particular. Good anecdotes speak to major issues and that is how many of the anecdotes here function. On the other hand, anecdotes may not be representative of larger issues. In the `ten of our favorite schools' section, some of the anecdotes are limited in the extreme. The authors visit a campus, meet some people they like and conclude that that institution would be a good place in which to enroll. As I'm sure the authors know, every campus includes both heroes and villains, the inspirational and the embarrassing.

The book is lively, lucid and `personal' in the best sense of the word, but like the `anecdotal', the `personal' is not always a good indicator. For example, the authors praise my undergraduate institution, Notre Dame, and list it among their ten faves, for being faithful to its principles. The main example: inviting President Obama to speak, despite his stands on abortion (including support for partial-birth abortion). As the authors must know, many of the Notre Dame alumni have seen that decision as a failure to be faithful to the institution's principles. Faithfulness is sometimes in the eye of the beholder.

The book has tended to evoke diametrically-opposed responses, with some people loving it and others dismissing it. As I said, I liked about 80% of it, but found parts to be simplistic. I do think we need more analysis here and more suggestions of ways to address concrete problems. Some of this book reads like the work of academic gadflies who have the courage to speak truth to corporatist power. Other sections read like the musings of a small town editorial writer.

47 of 55 people found the following review helpful.

thoughtful reading

By Videogal

What struck me most about this book was the authors' faith that almost all students might learn to crave intellectual stimulation and that they have the right to receive it in their college classes. It is an utopian ideal: that we should be teaching everyone in institutions of higher learning, at a low tuition, and that all these students should spend their college years not in vocational training but in developing the life of the mind. This proposition is put forward along with a lot of data and facts about higher education and an acknowledgment that about 64 percent of undergrads are enrolled in vocational majors. "We wish this weren't so," declare the authors. "We would like to persuade them that supposedly impractical studies are a wiser use of college years and ultimately a better investment. ... The undergraduate years are an interlude that will never come again, a time to liberate the imagination and stretch one's intellect without worrying about a possible payoff. We'd like this for everyone, not just the offspring of professional parents."

I am a retired college teacher. Most of my fellow teachers also wished that their students were in college for intellectual development per se; however, we taught those who walked into our classes. Many students whom I taught not only wanted a bachelor's degree mainly as a credential for employment; they were also working close to a forty hour week to pay for both tuition and room and board, even at a state college. I have heard from my days at Cornell that Professor Andrew Hacker, who taught there, was a legendary teacher, making introductory courses in political science come alive. I can only assume he has had the same response from his students at Queens College, a commuter school with many students who are the first in their family to attend college. I myself never did find the knack for reaching all or even 80 percent of the students in my classes. So this book's focus on the intellectual development of all students as a goal struck me as highly desirable but not so easy to reach.

Lots of proposals that Dreifus and Hacker put forth in this book are controversial and I did not agree with all of them. However, the prose is lively and much of what could be dry data if presented by lesser writers takes on a life of its own. It was with a bit of wry irony that I read about monied professorships, since my colleagues all seemed to earn between \$50,000-\$60,000 a year, which has provided us with a comfortable life and retirement but is far from extravagant.

The book will be of special interest to those in the educational field, and I highly recommend it.

93 of 116 people found the following review helpful.

Truly hits the mark

By Terry M. Perlin

A bit of context. I've just retired after 40 years of college and university teaching (including years spent at Williams College, a frequent illustration in your book). And for some years, I used Hacker's TWO NATIONS in a course on ethics and social responsibility.

So.... to HIGHER EDUCATION. I cannot find a false word or statment in the book. [It's rare for me to agree with much of anything.] Regarding the dumbing down of the curriculum; the careerism of so-called academic stars; the absurdities of the tenure process -- this book is on the mark. My gripes center on the often unexamined trend towards interdisciplinary studies. Nothing inherently dubious about looking at

problems from many perspectives (e.g., neuroscience), but to expect undergraduates, who haven't read any Shakespeare, aside from high school assignments of Hamlet and Julius Caesar, to evaluate the concept of "leadership" from, say, the political, psychological, and ethical perspectives. Well, as they say, give me a break.

The tone of the book -- which ranges from acerbic to occasionally cynical, does not disturb me. But I do think it may gloss [ab bit] over those rare but real faculty members whose old-fashioned commitment to rigor remains a vestige. As for dumping the business school, my most recent employer just completed a new B-school building which rivals any Hyatt hotel in its grossly sumptuous features. And once that pile opens, there's no closing it.

Though I would not expect Presidents and Deans to grasp the reality captured in this book, one can always hope that such a wise and reflective text will reach a wide audience.

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“Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus lay out the indictment of the nonprofit establishment in their eye-opening new book, Higher Education?” ?The Washington Post

“The Bottom Line: Hacker and Dreifus offer one of the best critiques yet of what is wrong and right about college in America today.” ?Businessweek

“A damning indictment of our colleges and universities you can't afford not to read. . . . Hacker and Dreifus have reignited the debate over what exactly we expect from a college degree.” ?The Daily Beast

“Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus have written a scathing populist attack on higher education that has something for everyone...[They] communicate in a clear, direct and lively manner.” ?The New Republic

“Until now no one has deconstructed the entire college and university system from the Ivy League to TV-touted trade schools, which Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus have just done in a new, brief volume that makes hamburger out of a herd of academia's sacred cows.” ?Chicago Daily Observer

“American students are being neglected by celebrity professors, shortchanged by rising tuitions, and led astray by college football... [Higher Education? is] a fierce critique of modern academia.” ?The Atlantic.com

“A wake-up call to alert both parents and students to the soaring cost of higher education in America and the steps that must be taken if it is become more accessible and affordable.” ?Tucson Citizen

“Compelling... Hacker and Dreifus are determined to challenge conventional wisdom and shake up the educational establishment. Higher Education? has the great virtue of challenging the status quo complacency inside academia. They are right to put a question mark in the title of their book... Impressive.” ?Tulsa World

“The book recommends colleges focus on education and strip away sports programs, trim bloated administrative budgets and spin off research and medical facilities.” ?Reuters/The New York Times

“A thoughtful assessment.” ?Booklist

“Ordinarily, I wouldn't expect any truly smart, beautifully researched, groundbreaking new book to eventually find its way into college reading lists. But Higher Education? may be the exception. It's a courageous indictment of our system of higher education itself -- with its outrageous costs and diminishing promise of a secure future for those who have the stamina to graduate. I am grateful to Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus for daring to say what needs to be said.” ?Barbara Ehrenreich, author of Nickel and Dimed and Bright-Sided

“Higher Education? is the most informative and readable book on the subject that I have ever read. Writing in a lively and engaging style, Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus demystify a subject that is usually

cloaked in academic jargon. Their analysis is sharp and their solutions to the problem of the escalating cost of higher education are sensible. I recommend this book to everyone who cares about the quality and accessibility of college education.” ?Diane Ravitch, author of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*

“Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus are sure to stir a badly needed uproar in the world of higher education. They make their argument so gracefully, with so much mischievous delight and understated humor, and undergirded by so broad a base of data and compelling reportage, that even the most furious defenders of the status quo will not be able to ignore this book and the outrage it most certainly will stir.” ?Jonathan Kozol, author of *Savage Inequalities* and *Letters to a Young Teacher*

“A timely and provocative book about a subject that affects all of us. *Higher Education?* is a thoroughly researched and welcome addition to the debate.” ?Joseph E. Stiglitz, Nobel laureate in economics

“*Higher Education?* stands out with facts, figures, and probing analysis. Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus clearly lay out why so many colleges and universities are helping to support a de facto American class system while failing their primary mission of preparing not only skilled labor but also producing educated, knowledgeable citizens who can play a role advancing our national life and strengthening our democracy. This is a thought-provoking book that I hope will generate serious national debate.” ?Vartan Gregorian, president, Carnegie Corporation of New York

“*Higher Education?* raises piercing questions about how a respected sector of our society is failing our young people. Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus unsparingly show where our colleges and universities have lost their principles and purpose. This book will spark a national debate that has been lacking, but is nonetheless essential.” ?The Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, president emeritus, University of Notre Dame

From now, locating the finished website that offers the completed publications will certainly be numerous, yet we are the trusted site to check out. *Higher Education?: How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money And Failing Our Kids---and What We Can Do About It* By Andrew Hacker, Claudia Dreifu with simple web link, simple download, and finished book collections become our excellent services to obtain. You could discover and make use of the benefits of picking this *Higher Education?: How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money And Failing Our Kids---and What We Can Do About It* By Andrew Hacker, Claudia Dreifu as everything you do. Life is consistently establishing and also you need some brand-new publication [Higher Education?: How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money And Failing Our Kids---and What We Can Do About It](#) By Andrew Hacker, Claudia Dreifu to be reference always.