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High Cost of Higher Education
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To many aspiring students in today's world, the cost of college is overwhelming and in some cases completely out of reach. Since the early eighties the price of college tuition has increased approximately twice as fast as the rate of inflation. Current costs for a college education range from \$5,000 dollars a year for public schools to nearly \$50,000 for elite private institutions. Though financial aid is obtainable for most students, the majority of the reported \$60 billion available is in the form of loans. This trend will only increase students' debt, which now is averaging \$20,000 after graduation. As a result of this imposing financial burden, many students and their parents ask why college is so expensive and question the reasoning behind such daunting costs. The explanations that colleges give are not always eagerly accepted.

Much of the costs of college can be traced back to excessive and nonproductive spending on the part of the colleges. In their endeavors to remain competitive and soar to the top of "college ranking" lists, universities fail to keep the students' best interests in mind. New constructions projects, sports complexes, advanced facilities, more comfortable dormitories, better resources, and more qualified professors all play a role in the vast price of college. While these facets certainly bring extravagance and exclusivity to a college campus, many of these features will positively impact only certain groups of students. In many instances, those who pay large tuitions are paying for research facilities that they won't use, sports complexes they may never visit, and accredited professors they will never meet.

A solution to this predicament would be a “no frills” institution, in which students only pay for the facilities that they use. Students would have access to the school’s workout room, for instance, yet this membership would tack on to the student’s tuition. Those who would not frequent the gym would not pay the bills. While this hypothetical college might not be the most luxurious or impressive, it would certainly cut down on costs for prospective students.

Excess spending is not the sole cause for outrageous college tuitions. Another factor is the declining support for education from state budgets. Without government aid, colleges are forced to make ends meet in other ways, such as raising prices. Also, more families than ever before are requiring financial aid to attend college. Those unable to pay rely on the colleges’ financial aid packages more than third party grants and scholarships. This financial aid places a burden on schools. To support the families in need colleges must increase tuition, and the families who can afford college end up paying for those who can’t. Instead of keeping tuition at a reasonable level where most students would be capable of affording school, colleges raise tuition and place unneeded financial strain on everyone.

Something needs to be done concerning today’s price of college. While there are certainly many alternative options such as cheaper public schools and community colleges, students should not have to pay extravagant prices for a high quality education. Forcing students into debt because of excessive spending casts a shadow over the educational opportunity that these colleges provide. Regardless of a college’s “rank” or “reputation,” all institutions should keep in mind that their goal is to educate students and develop their skills for a career.

