

Helping Students Pay for College

Removing College Price Barriers: What Government Has Done and Why It Hasn't Worked, by Michael Mumper. State University of New York, 1996. 304 pages. ISBN 0-7914-2704-8.

The Business of Higher Education: The American University and Its Banking Function, by Noam Arnt. Garland Publishers, 1995. 151 pages. ISBN 0-8153-2241-0.

Reviewed by Edward St. John

In the 1980s, when state and federal support for higher education wavered and tuition charges climbed faster than inflation, enrollments at most institutions still continued to climb.

Given these and related developments, some analysts began to question whether students were responsive to higher tuitions and reduced student aid (Hansen 1983; Hearn 1993).

However, in the mid-1990s many institutions have begun to run into serious problems with students' ability to afford a college education. So in the past few years, a number of new strategies for dealing with affordability have begun to surface. A couple have proposed reductions in tuition (Hamm 1995; Rothman 1995). Others have proposed

expanding student aid (McPherson and Schapiro 1991), which is the position taken by the authors of these two books.

In *Removing College Price Barriers*, political scientist Michael Mumper of Ohio University reviews recent developments in higher education financing policies at both the state and federal levels, including the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, and makes a proposal to strengthen the government role in making a college education more affordable. His book also offers an informed perspective on the recent politics of higher education finance.

Mumper's "feasible reform proposal" centers on revitalizing the Pell grants for the financially disadvantaged, which he suggests should be fixed at 75 percent of the national median price of attendance at public four-year colleges. As he points out, Pell grants have fallen well short of this level in the past decade. He also argues for changes in the cost provisions of the Pell program, for straightening out problems in the Guaranteed Student Loan Program, and for experimenting with novel approaches at the state level. Mumper's arguments are well crafted, but will not sit well with fiscal conservatives.

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