The Uncertain Preparation of Higher Education

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Abstract

This study examines the higher education system in the United States. It covers the areas of main concern within the uncertainty that a college degree may not prepare a person to face the issues that occur in the real world. The high cost of a college education, the confusing curriculum requirements, and the business-like aspect of the higher education are the areas of concern. A survey including college students and college graduates will be used. Certain statements from the survey were pulled to demonstrate with participant testimony. Also, interviews with the same demographics were conducted. Statements from those interviews are used to support the claim. Secondary sources are used to compliment the research gathered from the primary sources. The findings were significant and supported the researcher’s claim. This study exposes the results found about the inefficiency of service provided by colleges to students in the United States.

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Obtaining a college degree has been a goal for most people living in the United States. One can agree that our society places an enormous amount of emphasis on being educated. There is even more emphasis placed if it is post-secondary education. It seems our society believes one cannot have a successful future without a college degree. Some people go as far as judging other individuals based on their level of education. Does having a college education really help people in the real world? Are the skills obtained in college relevant to most people’s lives after they have graduated? Do individuals receive the appropriate benefit after their investment has been placed in a college degree? Higher education does not prepare one for the real world because of the cost, the curriculum, and the business nature it contains.

Debt is a word that many people do not like to hear. People may also not want to think about debt. Unfortunately, because of the ridiculous cost of a college education, many individuals are trapped into debt. People believe that going into debt to obtain a degree will be worth it because of the grand job they will land in the future. In an interview the researcher conducted this question was asked: “Do you believe having to pay off debt right after graduating from college inhibits a person’s life?” A female named Liz (English 3000 Interview, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2017) stated: “Yes, who wants to be giving away their money after working hard in school and finally getting a paying job?” It seems that people do not enjoy being in debt, especially after college. The unfortunate part is that it is difficult to attend a school that does not have a ridiculous cost of tuition. The Institute for College Access and Success (2015), states that 69 percent of graduates from public and non-profit colleges in 2014 had an average of $28,950 in student loan debt. Students should be able to come out of college and start saving their money; they should not be having to pay off debt that they accumulate while studying. An
education is worth a lot, but not if it means having to pay off student loans for the rest of one’s life. Individuals do not realize the stress it will cause in their futures. Science daily describes how student loan debt affects a person’s mental health: “researchers found that those who had higher amounts of debt incurred from student loans reported higher levels of depressive symptoms,” (University of South Carolina & Science Daily, 2015, par. 3). Many people today regret taking student loans because they are feeling the burden of having to pay them off. There are ways for colleges to bring down their prices, but they probably will not want to compromise. A great deal of people will agree that the cost of getting a post-secondary education is exhaustive.

Why do some college students know how to solve complicated calculus optimization problems but do not know how to write a check? Why do some students not know how to communicate and work well with other people? It turns out that higher education is poorly teaching students how to solve real life problems. Without a doubt, the education given by colleges is outstanding, but it is only a fraction of what people need to progress in life. In a survey conducted by the researcher this question was asked: “What are some things you would like colleges to teach their students?” A male of 19 years (English 3000 Survey, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2017) answered: “I would like to learn about dealing with stress, how to be more professional in the workplace, and how to write resumes and cover letters.” There are many people that graduate with college degrees yet do not use those skills because they land a job in another field. Some professions are really concentrated in their field, so any other kind of curriculum may be irrelevant. For instance, a student may be required to take a Geology course or Theatre course, but their future profession may be computer science or be a driver for a trucking company. A lot of graduates find out the hard way that they do not enjoy their profession in the major they chose to study. The researcher knows a person who has a Master’s
degree in Chemistry yet works for a Home Depot working in the paint department. It is depressing to think of all the graduates who endured all the course loads and stress only to have a job that uses none of those skills learned in college. Skills like balancing a checkbook, financing a house, or budgeting their income are more valuable. School can help get a job, but there are more practical things in life that an individual must deal with. Students would benefit from learning real life skills that they will surely face in the future.

The primary focus for an institution of education, in fact, should be education. However, colleges in today’s day seem to have their focus placed on monetary benefit. Many students complain about the way different schools seem to be money hungry. It seems that their main goal is to increase their revenue to build up their name. This is understandable because the better the school, the increased likelihood students will want to attend. However, students are paying the price; they are paying it literally. Students are going to school to follow their favorite sports teams and to party, rather than attending to receive a formal education. Institutions place emphasis on having good sports teams and attractive restaurants. They try to lure students to spend as much money as possible. A girl named Nicole (English 3000 Interview, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2017) stated: “I was too distracted by going out to party and watch the Pirates play (ECU) instead of focusing on my homework and projects. It was hard to say no when most of my friends were also doing the same as me.” It is absurd the way colleges have become a place for entertainment, instead of educating their students. Andrew Rossi (2014) describes how colleges act like businesses and try to lure students, more like consumers, with sports stadiums and recreation centers. In addition, they manage their finances similarly to regular businesses. The researcher chose his school, Dalton State College, because it does not have any major distractions from education. The culture of the school focuses primarily on
education. One can see the dedication in the Dalton State professors when learning in the classroom. Michael Hiltzik (2016) states how colleges act like corporations: “What’s worse is that universities are adopting the corporate model of profit and loss as though they’re businesses themselves” (par. 8). These schools are hurting students across the country with their treatment and tactics. It is not right for students to be treated as if they are consumers; students should not be entrapped in such a deceptive way.

   Education is critical in a human’s life. It makes a tremendous difference, whether an individual is educated or not. It is unfortunate that in our country we have so many issues with our higher education system. The cost of higher education is a hot topic in our government today, but it seems no solutions have yet been proposed. Students should not have to be pay excessive amounts of money to receive a college degree. The college curriculum should not be so broad; it should be more specialized. Colleges need to stop acting like businesses and start focusing on educating their students. Something must be done to counter this issue. Hopefully, there is less reading into this matter, and more acting done on it.
References


