

## *Dear usmnews.net*

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Please let me recommend the following article to your readers: [The Long Con: Pricier Colleges Provide Better Education](#). The article concerns *College Tuition: Four Decades of Financial Deception* by Robert Iosue. When I saw the title I assumed the article was about just a handful of very expensive colleges and universities. Actually, the article is about the climbing cost of education everywhere, something which apparently began with Ivy League colleagues and has spread to “wannabes” like our own Southern Miss.

The article identifies several culprits, many of which have been discussed on the pages of usmnews.net. Here are some excerpts from the article:

### **The Great Administrative Expansion**

“As colleges reduced the teaching load of faculty in the late ‘80s, schools started packing in *non*-teaching staff,” explains Iosue. Some of this is understandable, such as the need for increased campus security or a sophisticated technology team that can handle both the computing needs of students as well as the school itself. However, even accounting for such necessities, he characterizes the overall increase in pure administrative staff as “staggering.”

“The University of Minnesota has one non-teaching staff member for every 3.5 students.” From 1980 to 1993, the number of students attending the University of Pennsylvania went up by 29 students. “Over the same 13-year period, they added 1,820 administrators and other non-teaching staff!”

### **The Government Aids and Abets**

In typical fashion, the government reacted to the sky-rocketing cost of a college education by throwing money at the problem, primarily through the expansion of student loans. Unfortunately, that’s like responding to your teenager’s desire for fancy designer labels by increasing her weekly allowance so she can indulge in them.

The result was predictable: colleges continued to increase tuition because, well, thanks to the government and Sallie Mae, they *could*! After all, students had access to loans enabling them to afford higher tuition.

And the best part of all is that colleges have absolutely no obligation when it comes to paying that money back.

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Defaults are a growing concern. Part of the problem is that a B.A. isn't worth what it once was.

"Since 2005, the average student loan has grown by 35%, while median salaries [for those with B.A. degrees] have fallen 2.2%," according to Mussano. He cites a study by the Economic Policy Institute which found that in 2011 the average salary earned by someone with a BA degree dropped from \$22/hour to \$20/hour. Or, as he puts it, "In 1980, 1% of all taxi drivers in this country had a BA. Now it's 15%."

The article then ends with a somber warning.

Mussano and Iosue have looked at the demographic trends and concluded the future does not bode well for bloated, over-priced institutions of higher education. For one thing, the U.S. birth rate is declining. According to Mussano, in 2020 there will be fewer high school graduates than this country saw in 2011. This means that in the decades ahead, colleges will be competing for a smaller number of potential students.

Unfortunately, the warning may be coming too late for schools like Southern Miss. With its climbing debt load and its massive increase in administrators, the cost of which is being passed on to its students, its student population has declined and is likely to continue declining.