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## **Book Review: Churchill, M. L. (Ed.), (2025). *The Conversation on Higher Ed*. United States: Johns Hopkins University Press**

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Higher Ed is at a crossroads, as the collection of essays entitled *The Conversation on Higher Ed* claims, and, as the Foreword explains right from the beginning, the current situation has come under the microscope. Various topics of interest are taken one by one and analyzed by expert academics and journalists. The compendium is basically a collection of essays on higher education topics written by professionals and surveyed by editor Mary L. Churchill, who also added her own ideas as a writer in Part I. Organized in seven chapters, with a Series Editor's Foreword and a Preface, the book is addressed to the general public. It emphasizes the value of higher education and does an excellent job when it elucidates the idea that parents and students need to understand what it takes to succeed in college today. In doing so, the project covers broader challenges that students will have to face in college: debt, affordability, belonging, the future of college education, as well as issues related to learning conditions and career outcomes.

More to the point, the Preface acknowledges that higher education is under siege, but at the same time, we are made aware that "Higher education will be critical to overcoming the current challenges facing our democracy and our work force. But while our elite institutions provide some of the world's best training for the global elite, we are failing to bring the same level of care and concern to educating the non-elite young people who may live across the street from our universities and colleges" (p. xiii). Therefore, it becomes more crucial to address relevant issues ranging from free speech to artificial intelligence in teaching and learning.

From the current state of education in the United States, the Preface moves on to the more specific topics, like education as a public good, which also leads to a pertinent question: "Why aren't students going to college?" and then provides an answer: "The confusion, perceptions, and realities of the cost of college education have themselves become a barrier" (p. xx). The reader is then presented with suggestions that might reverse the decline: partnering with school districts, which would include dual-enrollment programs – exploratory courses – whereby "college professors teach college-credit-bearing courses to high school students" (p. xxii). Such courses would include college writing and college algebra, thus making knowledge in those fields more affordable.

The idea of making college more affordable is then followed by several retention strategies including "efforts that have been made in increasing the retention and successful progression of students toward degree completion" (p. xxvii). Moving beyond traditional students, the preface also tackles the need to expand recruitment efforts beyond traditional-aged students and, whenever possible, actively partner with employers – given that "unemployment rates are so low that companies can't wait for students to graduate from college" (p. xxix). The Preface re-affirms the strong belief that we all need a college education, but we will have to find the will to do it.

*Part I. Succeeding at College* addresses issues of concern for students and their families when applying to college becomes a complicated process. The preparation for the best way to gain admission is highlighted in the first chapters, and research conducted in several avenues of exploration lead to factors that must be taken into consideration in the admission decision. Accordingly, Timothy Poynton from University of Massachusetts is strongly recommending that first-generation college students be advised to “look up how students do after they graduate,” “do well in challenging high school classes,” “show your interest,” and “organize information to do comparisons” (pp. 6-8). Specifically, when talking about high school performance, the author points to the fact that “According to an annual survey of college admissions directors, GPA has been more important than SAT or ACT test scores since long before the COVID-19 pandemic” (p. 7). As a result, high school students have been encouraged to take the most challenging classes available and perform well in those classes.

The topic of Direct Admission comes to the fore in Chapter 3, when Mary Churchill from Boston University offers valuable advice to help and empower students in their quest for the best way to apply for college. In direct admission, certain colleges and universities accept school graduates without the need of an application. In order to reverse the trend of declining enrollment in higher education, the educator finds pertinent questions to be asked: “What is direct admission?”; “How can students qualify?”; “What are the benefits for college?”; “What are the benefits for students?”; “Is this the future of college admissions?” (pp. 17-19). As Mary Churchill further explains, this new option for admission is gaining popularity.

Student loans are the next seemingly debatable topic, with decisions that might lead to a well-paid job, but at the same time bring burdensome consequences. Researchers and analysts clarify most of the aspects surrounding student loans and come up with useful tips: “File for Federal aid early”; “Understand different types of loans;” “Contact your financial aid adviser;” “Understand the impact of debt”; “Know your repayment options.” In all these cases, there are well-asserted options for subsidized and unsubsidized loans. “Subsidized loans are funded by the government and offer better interest rate terms. They are based on needs and do not accrue interest while you are still in school. Unsubsidized loans may be available regardless of your financial needs, but they accrue interest as soon as the loan is distributed to you” (p. 24). Several sources of aid are made available to help and empower students to make the right choice of loans: institutional grant aids, federal loans, and federal work-study programs.

According to Walter Wendler from West Texas A&M University, the advice regarding loans is: “Do not borrow money to attend West Texas A&M University, or any university, for the first two years. If you must borrow to attend a university, then attend community college first, but don’t borrow a penny for community college either. Pay as you go” (p. 29). The rationale behind this statement is meant to stress the responsibility of university leadership “to point out the challenges for students and families when borrowing for education” (p. 31). For better words, a student’s debt responsibility will remain, eventually, on his/her shoulder.

Building on the previous sections, the authors of Chapter 6, 7, and 8 elucidate salient details about the best advice that can be given to first-year college students. Starting from the premise that “connections are everything” (p. 34), the current project explains that “The quality and frequency of student-faculty interactions play a major role in learning.” (Lundberg and Schreiner, 2004, n.p.; quoted on p. 35). Additional suggestions, presented as titles of subchapters, relate to “making friends in class,” “using the resources that are there for you,” “participate in a relationship accelerator,” and “connect with yourself.” As such, connections and interactions are viewed as confidence boosters with unexpectedly positive results.

According to a 2020 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, people with higher degrees (including Master’s and doctorate) can expect a higher starting salary. As Jaymes Pine from Stanford University and Eric Grodsky from University of Wisconsin, Madison, point out the ‘advanced degree wage premium,’ which basically means “the increased amount of money that college graduates who go on to earn a masters’ doctoral, or professional degree in law, medicine, and other fields can expect to make above those with just a bachelor’s degree” (p. 41). The prospect of students working in a job related to their major adds a special bonus, because “they find real-world connections between their job and classes – such as a nursing student working in a hospital. Given that work is a necessity for many students, educators can do more to guide students toward jobs that might increase their chance for college success” (p. 48). Jobs and majors may, therefore, provide the connection with the real world.

Practical examples from studies conducted by Sowl et al., (2021) reveal that “the more students enjoyed school in adolescence and felt as though they belonged, the more likely they were to move back to their rural hometown after leaving college. Even after considering demographic, neighborhood, and college characteristics, positive middle and high school experiences remained significant” (Sowl, et al., 2021, p. 54). Such research results coincide with the fact that “some rural communities have begun to invest in local businesses, outdoor recreational activities, and local schools to attract both newcomers and returners” (ibid., p. 56). Von Reichert, Cromartie, and Arthun (2013) point out that societal benefits brought over by college graduates greatly contribute to their community’s economic growth. The corollary of Chapters 10 and 11 circles back to the values a college degree brings to the labor market. Johann N. Neeem from Western Washington University theorizes that “What makes college graduates desirable is their ability to think broadly about the world and their capacity to use language and numbers well” (p. 61). Practically speaking, college education cannot be reduced to a set of skills; the overall picture is obviously much bigger when we take into consideration that learning, accumulating knowledge, and developing communication skills also make graduates better citizens and better thinkers.

While students’ goals may be different, the same chapters acknowledge a perceptible change in how students view the purpose of college. In an essay about social mobility, Marcela G. Cuellar and Ken Saichae from University of California, Davis, and Alicia Bencomo Garcia from Cabrillo College conducted surveys with 21 undergraduates at the University of California,

Davis, who were interested in education as a possible career. The aim was to understand how first-generation students perceive the role of higher education in their lives and in society. Although the main goals have remained the same, including professional development or learning for the sake of intellectual growth, “Surveys show that more students are entering college to make more money, compared with the 1960s, when students sought a higher education for more holistic reasons, such as seeking a meaningful purpose in life” (p. 65). The study also reveals that – for some students – pursuing a career, however, is considered a purpose above financial wealth.

In an attempt to solve the student loan problem, Nicholas Tampio of Fordham University introduces the Gates-funded commission that was established “to address a question that is on the minds of many families, policy makers, and tax payers: Is college worth it?” (p. 68) The author of this chapter contends that, while the commission has the power to advise students and their families, “this approach alone may not have much impact” (p. 69). If the focus is still on the economic returns of higher education, as Tampio asserts, “the commission may lead policy makers to put less weight on the other reasons that students go to college, including to read humanity’s greatest books, grapple with big questions about justice, study in other countries, work at internships, and think about what to do with the rest of one’s life” (p. 71). The commission, however, may encourage Congress to make federal loans and grants available to students majoring in engineering or business, but not for students in majors like theology or humanities.

Part II also includes an interesting article about US students’ foreign language capabilities, and the danger that this might affect national security. A 2023 *Modern Language Association* report “showed that the study of languages other than English at the university level experienced an unprecedented drop of 16.6% between 2016 and 2021” (p. 74). The above-mentioned report also stresses the unprecedented drop in college-level language requirements, which have continued to decline. Deborah Cohn from Indiana University Bloomington correctly observes that, when languages are viewed as critical to national security, we must be aware that universities need time to expand their language courses, which also means that students would need “hundreds to thousands of hours of study to reach professional proficiency” (p. 76). These findings may result in possible negative effects on US national security and diplomacy.

The topic of “free college” proposals garners attention from researchers in the chapters dealing with a balanced approach to public and private institutions. Michael Simkovic from University of Southern California is considering two important factors in dealing with such relevant issues: cost and quality. In his opinion, it would be easier to make higher education free at public institutions where a lower tuition is offered. But when quality is discussed, Simkovic provides facts and numbers: “For example, during the 2020-2021 school year, four-year public institutions spent about US\$16,000 less than four-year private nonprofits per student per year” (p. 94). In their article published in *Research in Higher Education* in May 2006, Scott, M., Bailey, and Keinzl, G. researched the tuition topic and found that lower spending leads to poorer outcomes at public institutions.

A caveat is added when Simkovic observes that many students may not attend college unless it is close to home, and restricting these students to public institutions would not be advantageous at all. Specifically, “in some parts of the country only private institutions offer programs like business economics or electromechanical engineering” (p. 95). As such, students would definitely benefit because they would have a wider range of choices. Before choosing what school to attend, students are also invited to check those institutions online and do some thorough research.

The focus in Chapter 17 switches to the main reasons why students leave for-profit colleges. The interviews conducted on 12 students who transferred from a private for-profit to a public nonprofit university in 2021. Two main reasons were mentioned: affordability and the unexpected experience of having to take out loans to cover the for-profit colleges balance when costs went up. Lack of majors and inflexible schedules were also mentioned among the additional reasons for students moving to nonprofit institutions. In order to avoid the potential pitfalls associated with for-profit schools, students and their families are advised to seek all the information they need prior to enrollment.

An online source named *College Scoreboard* offers valuable information for interested students: “The *College Scoreboard*, an online tool provided by the US Department of Education, lets people search for schools according to majors offered, location, and other criteria. With search filters set, the *College Scoreboard* provides earnings and student debt data for recent graduates” (p. 106). Another good tip for students would be to pay close attention to the fine print of all the financial offerings – whether a scholarship offer is renewable or not. The difference could help students estimate the overall cost when choosing a school or another.

The chapters on inequality and the failure of social systems in Part IV underscore the negative results of our country’s social support systems. A study conducted by educators Arielle Kuperberg from University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and Joan Maya Mazelis from Rutgers University, Camden concentrated on the effects of debt after college. Their article entitled “Student Loans, Physical and Mental Health, and Health Care use and Delay in College” was published in the *Journal of American College Health* in 2023 and revealed “how debt affects after college, including the consequences for health, housing, romantic relationships, and career trajectories” (p. 113). Their findings indicated that inequalities in health and delays in doctor visits are still visible after graduation.

In order to fully grasp the magnitude of failure in providing assistance to student needs, the authors of Chapters 19 through 22 underline some of the inequalities they found through solid research: The digital divide that disrupts learning, the living and learning conditions, as well as student’s caregiving responsibilities. Conway, Wladis, and Hachey (2021) investigated what they called “time poverty” in a well-conducted research project: “In a 2021 study of 11,195 US college students, we found that college students who have children had significantly less time for college than their childless peers – about 4.3 hours less per

week, to be specific. This ‘time poverty’ is greatest for mothers of preschool-age children” (p. 121). As a result, some of the student parents had to enroll in college part-time.

In a similar study, the same authors, Conway, Wladis, and Hachey (2022) discovered other trends related to the concept of ‘time poverty.’ Survey results of researching student parents extended to other groups, “including students who in enroll online courses, women, and students of color. We found that students who chose to enroll in online courses had higher time poverty and that this partially explained their worse college outcomes” (p. 124.) A further study conducted in 2024 showed that time poverty also contributes to several other iniquities. Burn-out, less time for sleep, hidden gender inequality – they all led to a high proportion of outcome gaps by race and ethnicity.

As reported in the current collection of essays, food assistance for those students who are food insecure (between 9% and more than 50%) was well documented and supported by SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which unfortunately, expired in 2023. Other solutions to fix student hunger include updating financial aid for college students and extending the National School Lunch Program. Suzanna M. Martinez from University of California, San Francisco, adds her own recommendation: “Students must be better educated on things like financial aid, personal budgeting, and self-advocacy” (p. 130). When college education is getting more and more expensive, helping students cope with basic living challenges turns out to be ever so important.

The authors of Part IV, in their sustained effort to improve the current situation in our higher education institutions, look at the whole picture when they acknowledge that certain things have already been discussed and relatively solved: food pantries, WiFi hotspots, and transportation vouchers. When colleges and universities are trying to repair the damages of “societal failure,” prison education programs become a necessity and represent a growing field with basic adult education and English-language programs. According to Mneesha Gellman from Emerson College, education programs are made available in some prisons through a partnership with colleges and universities. “Students in ‘college in prison’ programs are usually enrolled in college-level degree-granting programs that lead to certificates, associate degrees, or bachelor degrees” (p. 134). These programs sometimes include library research support, accessibility services, and academic advising.

Racial diversity becomes the main focus in Part V, which starts with a short article about the many ways colleges seek to increase racial diversity without relying on race in college admission. As stated by Lauren Foley from Western Michigan University, “When the US Supreme Court outlawed the use of racial identity in college admission in June 2023, it forced colleges and universities to rethink how to maintain and increase diversity in their student bodies” (p. 141). The consequences of this decision were largely felt in places like University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of Michigan. Affirmative action was considered a useful tool in making sure there is diversity on every campus, and without this tool some institutions of higher learning were forced to resort to race-neutral strategies to maintain or increase racial diversity.

Holistic admissions – as viewed in this context – would be one choice, whereby assessment of an applicant’s academic achievements utilize multiple factors like “socioeconomic hardship, educational disadvantages, or other forms of adversity” (p. 143). According to Niu, S. X. and Tienda, M. (2010), legislative solutions have been tried in other states, where applicants whose GPA put them in a top-tier percentage of their graduating class were guaranteed acceptance to state universities. Another approach was suggested by the admissions office at Sarah Lawrence College, where students were asked “to comment on the role that race has played in their lives” (p. 144). Demographic factors provided by computer software were added to the recommendations offered for the application review.

Chapter 25 encapsulates the five ways that college campuses benefit from diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. As Erica Jaqueline Licht from Harvard Kennedy School contends, these programs have led to positive results because students perform better academically, they are less biased, faculty is more satisfied, curriculum and classroom learning are more engaging, and students are more prepared to be local leaders. Smith and Schonfeld (2000) summarized the social science research accomplishments and attested that inclusion programs result in a positive difference at US colleges and universities mainly because they promote “better student learning” (p. 151). Owing to their better learning outcomes, graduating students at such institutions were found to be better prepared to function in multiracial professional settings.

A crucial element in the education process, as touted by Michelle Samura from Santiago Canyon College, is belonging, “a key factor in how companies keep employees engaged” (p. 155). ‘Belonging’ has been treated in the workplace because it is more than a buzzword. In the same context belonging has been identified as “a critical need for human beings, especially for college students. Studies have found that belonging is a key to college student success. Belonging is associated with students not dropping out of school, with their psychologically adjusting to college, and with their academic achievement” (p. 156). The same source indicates that belonging takes effort and is a shared responsibility. Colleges and universities should pay special attention to display the difference between marketing materials and what the students feel and experience on campus.

The topic of diversity and ethnicity develops further in the chapters dealing with female faculty and female college presidents. Researchers like Sarah Wilson (2010), working with the Faculty Workload and Rewards Projects, “analyzed workloads for 957 faculty members from 22 US colleges and universities.” They “identified how racial and gender inequalities lead to extra work and less recognition for female faculty members” (p. 162). Specifically, research shows that white women and faculty members of color acknowledge the unfair distribution of workloads among faculty.

As presented by Felecia Commodore from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, the importance of having female college presidents in the Ivy League is obvious when we look at the figures of about 60% of undergraduate as well as master’s and doctoral students in the United States. By comparison, the same author found that women presidents of American colleges

and universities represent a far lower percentage. This low number can be explained by several factors, like “exclusion from networks that provide mentorship-reward and promotion structures that are not equitable across genders and bias against women in academic leadership roles” (p. 167). Furthermore, according to the same source, data college analysis stresses the relevance of leadership roles such as dean, vice-provost, and provost that pave the way to the presidency of higher education institutions. This context also explains “the bias against women that occurs when it comes to academic leadership roles” (ibid). Hiring women in these positions would obviously signal a change in how institutions embrace evolution.

Challenges coming from the shifting political landscape generating a political polarization within the US are highlighted in Part VI, together with the use of artificial intelligence and worker shortages in areas like health care and PK-12 education. Students’ mental health is one such challenge and five practices are suggested to deal with it: support in the syllabus and in class, identifying at-risk students, using the QPR (question, persuade, refer) protocol, addressing real-world issues and events, plus the instructor burn-out that may become a major concern. Educators are encouraged to give their students a chance to share their feelings when major events take place locally or internationally.

Four scholars (Nicholas Tampio from Fordham University, Patricia A. Young from University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Asim Ali, from Auburn University, and Shital Thedki from University of Richmond) weigh in and express their opinions about Artificial Intelligence in Chapter 30. The general consensus is that students who resort to sources like ChatGPT only practice how to copy and paste, which is generally defined as plagiarism. “The consequences will come when students take higher-level courses or land a job and lack the literacy skills to perform competently. We will have created a generation of functionally illiterate adults who lack the capacity to engage in advanced thinking – like critiquing or comparing and contrasting information” (p. 183). In other words, using Artificial Intelligence does not help students to develop the basic academic skills, or to think and write by themselves.

The counterargument comes in the next section of the book, where educators like Patricia A. Young from University of Maryland, Baltimore County, defends the use of AI and refers to an *Educause* poll, whereby “some of the challenges to acquiring and using AI included a lack of technical expertise, financial concerns, insufficient leadership, and biased algorithms” (p. 188). Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are among those institutions quoted for their approach to the new uses of AI with millions of dollars invested in training the faculty to broaden the use of AI and conduct experiments to improve its usefulness.

From the shortage of nurses and its impact on the ever growing number of US population we segue to another pressing matter, academic tenure. According to George Justice from University of Tulsa, “Academic tenure is a system of strong job protections that virtually guarantees a university professor will never be fired or let go except in extreme of circumstances” (p. 197). For many university professors, academic tenure is an achievement that can be accomplished in approximately 5 to 10 years, a probationary period that gives the assistant professor a chance “to prove academic excellence in teaching, research, and service to the campus community” (ibid). This probationary period is followed by a yearlong process, during which time colleagues, peer faculty, and administration assess and evaluate the educator’s work.

Research and interviews with people in academia as well as senators in certain states have discovered that tenure tracks have come under severe scrutiny in the past 50 years or so, mostly prompted by economic, political, ideological, and social reasons. The same educator from University of Tulsa plays the race/ethnicity card when he refers to data found in the National Center for Education Statistics (2021): “While research shows that diverse faculty and peer viewpoints lead to a richer education for students, the tenured faculty are whiter and more male than the general body of college teachers, let alone the US population. Indeed, tenured faculty have become demographically inconsistent with the students in their classrooms: 73% of college professors are white, whereas 51.1% of the population under 24 years old was non-Hispanic white in 2019” (p. 201). Such statements lead to pertinent questions about the academic tenure and its validity: Is it “essential to civilization? Does it require tenure for faculty? Or is tenure a destructive job perk that limits innovation in important service industry by entrenching faculty who may be mediocre and old-fashioned in their teaching and research?” (ibid). Judging by the current trend in higher education institutions, the reader can only acknowledge the controversial side of this argument.

The political aspect comes back in Part VII, where student activism and free speech are discussed in the current situation of disputes and controversial approaches from both sides of the political spectrum. Past examples of debatable issues – like Vietnam, Occupy Wall Street, MeToo, Black Lives Matter - are lined up next to surging activism related to the war in Palestine and Israel. The articles point out the roles of colleges and universities in fostering free speech and activism, and the narratives presented by the two political parties are deemed to be flawed, one blaming professors for indoctrinating their students, and the other one overblowing the concerns about free speech on college campuses. Timothy Ryan and Mark McNeill, both from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, have conducted extensive research among students which leads them to opine that “The deeper story about free expression on campus, as our study shows, is not just about the shouting that takes place during high-profile incidents on campus. It’s also about what students say – and feel compelled to keep to themselves – in lecture halls and classrooms throughout the school year” (p. 209). From this point of view, the typical experience of a college student may be better understood when interviews and discussions go beyond those confrontations.

From concerns about free speech, Bradford Vivian from Pennsylvania State University moves to the concept of censorship and offers “alternative ways to frame debates about higher education,” which “can lead to discussions that are more constructive and accurate while better protecting fundamental American values such as free speech and democracy” (p. 211). In a nuanced perspective, the same author suggests the following constructive ideas: avoid stereotypes about college students, consider all forums for free speech in universities, recognize the true threats to free speech on campuses, and understand the role of academic

forum. Recent findings related to rising government and state interference condemn the “censorship of materials about race, gender, sexuality, and multiculturalism in K-12 and public libraries” (p. 214), the reason being that “the quality of public debates over free speech in higher education matters” (ibid). These debates can definitely help in exercising academic freedom, which is vital for democracy.

In sharp contrast to some media reports dealing with sensational incidents of political conflicts, Graham Wright and Leonard Saxe, both from Brandeis University, emphasize the other side of the political climate. While certain sources claimed that American campuses are generally hostile to unpopular ideas, the authors of Chapter 36 “found a much more complicated story. At Brandeis University and Harvard, more than 60% of liberal students felt that unpopular opinions could not be expressed freely on campus, and their moderate and conservative peers agreed. Yet, at the University of Florida, a majority of students, regardless of ideology, felt that their campus was open to the expression of unpopular viewpoints” (pp. 217-218). The survey was conducted between 2015 and 2019, including both public and private schools in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the South.

When student protests are called into action, Jerusha Osberg Conner from Villanova University condones the example of students at Syracuse University who occupied the campus administration building in the 2019-2020 academic year. “Using the hashtag #NotAgainSU, they called for action in the wake of racist, anti-Semitic, and bias-related incidents that allegedly occurred on campus since they staged an earlier sit-in to protest a spate of hate-speech acts on campus” (p. 221). Every little detail about types of student activism on campus is cataloged, “from relying on overseas sweatshops to produce their college apparel, to polluting the environment, and to doing too little to investigate and punish sexual assault and harassment on campus” (p. 222). When school officials at Syracuse University could not find the right answers to such stringent issues, Amanda Nicholson, the assistant provost and dean of student success declared: “What we know is our current policies in how we work with protests have failed. They don’t work. This is not a workable situation. We need to come up with something that really does work” (ibid.; quoted in Kilgannon, 2020, n.p.). After interviewing more than 200 student activists at 120 colleges and universities in the United States, Osberg argues that “most believed their activism enhanced their academic performance” (p. 224). Equally, it is worth mentioning that 12.5% of the students said activism hurt their grades or academic engagement. The crux of the matter, as the author masterfully concludes his essay, is that leadership at colleges and universities should be looking for the causes and the conditions that prompted those incidents.

In conclusion, *The Conversation on Higher Education* edited by Mary L. Churchill provides a much-needed insight into reshaping the landscape of the academic life when the US institutions of higher learning have reached a “major inflection point” and the current situation has to be reversed and problems need to be fixed. The compendium of practical essays written by experts in academia tackles major issues that make up the world of colleges and universities in the overall crisis of democracy, in the aftermath of Covid-19, and in the general decline of popular belief in the power of higher education. Surveys and study results have revealed serious flaws, some more or less concerning, others pointing to a new direction with hopeful consequences.

Some articles show an obvious political bias and read like ads written during an election year supporting one party against another. Generally speaking, however, the rest of the papers display a more professional balance. The biggest assets of the present volume lie in its well-articulated verbiage, in its focus on things that really matter on campus these days, like freedom of speech, the need for knowledge in the work market, better curriculum perspectives, the implications of Artificial Intelligence, creating better learning conditions, as well as taking a positive look at the current state of affairs. When we leave aside the dismal failure of academic and political leadership, and, instead, focus on constructive criticism, we may very well find ourselves on the cusp of a revolutionary transformation.

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