



Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk

Richard H. Hersh, John Merrow

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What is actually happening on college campuses in the years between admission and graduation?

Not enough to keep America competitive, and not enough to provide our citizens with fulfilling lives.

When *A Nation at Risk* called attention to the problems of our public schools in 1983, that landmark report provided a convenient "cover" for higher education, inadvertently implying that all was well on America's campuses.

Declining by Degrees blows higher education's cover. It asks tough--and long overdue--questions about our colleges and universities. In candid, coherent, and ultimately provocative ways, *Declining by Degrees* reveals:

- how students are being short-changed by lowered academic expectations and standards;
- why many universities focus on research instead of teaching and spend more on recruiting and athletics than on salaries for professors;
- why students are disillusioned;
- how administrations are obsessed with rankings in news magazines rather than the quality of learning;
- why the media ignore the often catastrophic results; and
- how many professors and students have an unspoken "non-aggression pact" when it comes to academic effort.

Declining by Degrees argues persuasively that the multi-billion dollar enterprise of higher education has gone astray. At the same time, these essays offer specific prescriptions for change, warning that our nation is in fact at greater risk if we do nothing.

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