



# **Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education)**

*By William G. Bowen, Michael S. McPherson*

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American higher education faces some serious problems—but they are not the ones most people think. In this brief and accessible book, two leading experts show that many so-called crises—from the idea that typical students are drowning in debt to the belief that tuition increases are being driven by administrative bloat—are exaggerated or simply false. At the same time, many real problems—from the high dropout rate to inefficient faculty staffing—have received far too little attention. In response, William G. Bowen and Michael S. McPherson provide a frank assessment of the biggest challenges confronting higher education and propose a bold agenda for reengineering essential elements of the system to meet them. The result promises to help shape the debate about higher education for years to come.

*Lesson Plan* shows that, for all of its accomplishments, higher education today is falling short when it comes to vital national needs. Too many undergraduates are dropping out or taking too long to graduate; minorities and the poor fare worse than their peers, reinforcing inequality; and college is unaffordable for too many. But these problems could be greatly reduced by making significant changes, including targeting federal and state funding more efficiently; allocating less money for "merit aid" and more to match financial need; creating a respected "teaching corps" that would include nontenure faculty; improving basic courses in fields such as math by combining adaptive learning and face-to-face teaching; strengthening leadership; and encouraging more risk taking. It won't be easy for faculty, administrators, trustees, and legislators to make such sweeping changes, but only by doing so will they make it possible for our colleges and universities to meet the nation's demands tomorrow and into the future.

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## **Editorial Review**

Review

### **One of Bloomberg's Best Books of 2016**

"Bachelor's degrees should be completed in three years. MOOCs should replace general education. Coding boot camps are the game changer. College should be free. Internships are more important than instruction. Eliminate administrative bloat and higher education will be prosperous. Pick your quick fix for higher education, but it won't be endorsed in *Lesson Plan*, a new book by William G. Bowen and Michael S. McPherson. They make clear early in the book that while higher education has serious problems, they find most punditry and political proposals for higher education to be wrong."--**Scott Jaschik, *Inside Higher Ed***

"A masterly summary of the state of higher education.... [Bowen and McPherson] bring together current research, broad conversations with experts, and their own perspective in a brilliant, coherent explanation of their conviction that academia continues to be a vital investment in human capital.... A must-read for everyone concerned about price and quality in higher education."--***Library Journal***

"*Lesson Plan*[is] a concise, compelling, and, at times, courageous analysis of the ways in which institutions of higher education are failing to provide equal opportunity and lay out an ambitious reform agenda."--**Glenn Altschuler, *Huffington Post***

"I recommend [this book] to anyone who wants a better understanding of the problems in higher education in the US, and especially to anyone who is working in higher education and wants to contribute to improving it."--**Harry Brighouse, *Crooked Timber***

"A short, yet disarmingly rich and precise, primer on higher-education policy and its compelling relevance for the future of our economy and democracy.... [C]ombines the precision born of encyclopedic knowledge with the plain-spoken prose of experts for whom policy analysis is second nature."--**Clayton Spencer, *Harvard Magazine***

"A short and clearly written book about the problems facing higher education in the United States. It offers the reader a great deal of data and support for its claims, and it is comprehensive in its approach as its programme for change presents multiple proposals requiring action by federal and state governments as well as institutions."--**Chris Mayer, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management***

### **From the Back Cover**

"It has become fashionable to critique higher education. Politicians, journalists, and others are quick to proclaim all that is wrong, typically uninformed by either data or experience. Into this fray step two wise and experienced hands. Bowen and McPherson offer a thoughtful and informed insiders' critique of the academy. Drawing on both data and years of experience as successful college presidents, they shed light on access, costs, completion, time to degree, and the need for strong leadership. This little book should be required reading for all who care about the future of our nation's colleges and universities."--**Lawrence S. Bacow, president emeritus of Tufts University**

"This accessibly written book provides a concise discussion and analysis of many of the key topics in today's debates about higher education. I don't know of any other book that offers a comprehensive review of these issues in a condensed and readable format."--**Rebecca M. Blank, chancellor of University of Wisconsin-Madison**

"This short book is big in design, research, and smarts. After winnowing the key issues in American higher education from the noisy multitude, Bowen and McPherson apply the latest data to clarify each before offering a series of astute suggestions for solving them. Their lesson plan should be required reading for every academic administrator and trustee in the country."--**James Axtell, College of William and Mary**

"One of the central purposes of *Lesson Plan* is to undermine, through the careful use of data and other forms of evidence, much of the nonsense that passes for analyses of higher education in the popular press, the political sphere, and even the ostensibly scholarly world. The book provides a healthy, provocative, and much-needed dose of careful reasoning and sometimes daring advocacy for change. And its discussion of the financing of higher education is the best I have ever read."--**Brian C. Rosenberg, president of Macalester College**

"This small book punches way above its weight. The authors don't just identify major issues confronting American higher education. They use their considerable skill and wisdom to debunk common misperceptions and they chart a path guiding colleges and universities to safer harbors from the roiling waters they inhabit today. All who care about higher education and its indispensable role in advancing society should not just read this book; they should study it carefully."--**William Kirwan, chancellor of the University System of Maryland**

"Bowen and McPherson hit it just right with *Lesson Plan*. The messages on issues ranging from student debt to pointless PhD programs are perfectly clear and impeccably argued. The powers that be will find this book impossible to ignore."--**Robert M. Solow, Nobel Laureate in Economics**

#### About the Author

**William G. Bowen** (1933-2016) was president emeritus of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Princeton University and founding chairman of ITHAKA.. His many books included *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (with Derek Bok) (Princeton). **Michael S. McPherson** is president of the Spencer Foundation, former president of Macalester College, and the author of many books. Bowen, McPherson, and Matthew M. Chingos are the authors of *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America's Public Universities* (Princeton).

#### Users Review

##### From reader reviews:

##### **Stephen Conway:**

Here thing why that Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education) are different and trustworthy to be yours. First of all looking at a book is good however it depends in the content of it which is the content is as delicious as food or not. Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education) giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any guide out there but there is no reserve that similar with Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education (The William G. Bowen Memorial Series in Higher Education). It gives you thrill studying journey, its open up your personal eyes about the thing in which happened in the world which is probably

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