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## The Crisis in Public Higher Education: A New Perspective

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**Abstract:** Public higher education in the United States is being challenged, as never before, by numerous conditions that need to be addressed if the public college and university systems are to survive and fulfill their responsibilities to the American public. Student enrollment at these institutions has been on a significant downward trend for a full decade. There has been a discernible decline in the esteem with which the American public holds higher education. There are numerous dimensions to this phenomenon. In this brief article, we focus on only three dimensions of the problem: escalating college costs; mounting student debt; and the failures of boards of trustees to act as fiduciaries representing the interests of students, parents, and citizens. Once we address these issues broadly, we offer feasible solutions that could improve the circumstances surrounding public higher education and enable it to chart a new course.

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