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Major education issues addressed

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Review

Major education issues addressed

by Kenneth P. Mortimer and Michael L. Tierney, **The Three "R's" of the Eighties: Reduction, Reallocation and Retrenchment** Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education, Research Report No. 4, 1979, 84 pp. \$4.00

Since February of 1972, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education has commissioned, and the American Association for Higher Education has published, a series of reports on major issues facing higher education. Through summarizing and synthesizing the literature on topics under study these reports are designed to present the reader with an understanding of the current issues and recent developments related to higher education.

Recognizing that a research report is very seldom the topic for a book review, this work by Mortimer and Tierney appears to be an exception to that rule. In **The Three "R's" of the Eighties: Reduction, Reallocation and Retrenchment**, the authors address several of the major issues which face higher education in the coming decade in a fashion which makes this manuscript required reading for faculty, administrators and other policy makers. Writing in a concise and analytic fashion, Mortimer and Tierney review the predictions on the decline in college student population in the 1980s and the implications of such a decline for institutional finance, programs and staffing.

In the first major section of the report the authors review the environment of postsecondary education in the 1980s. An analysis of projections on the traditional college age population and institutional attempts at identifying alternative markets of "other" student populations is presented. Using these demographic data the authors present an analysis of the impact of enrollment decline on institutional revenues and expenditures. Particular at-

tention is given to the overall impact of enrollment decline on income from tuition and fees and enrollment-driven state support, formulas and the need for alternative sources of revenue to offset the decline in enrollment based support. The role of federal funding and private philanthropy are addressed as well as the distinct problems of public and private institutions.

The analysis of trends in institutional expenditures draw upon the work of other authors in the field and include the impact of inflation on institutional costs, the problems created by the labor intensiveness of the education industry, and long-range financial equilibrium problems facing institutions of higher education.

The section of the manuscript which makes the most important contribution to the literature on prospects for the future of higher education in the 1980s is entitled "Reductions, Reallocations and Retrenchments." In addressing current and future crises related to staff reductions, reallocations and retrenchment due to enrollment decline and financial constraints the authors provide descriptions and analyses of both extant policies which have been adopted by institutions and case study examples of institutions which have implemented reduction or retrenchment activities. A significant contribution of this section is the descriptions of alternative actions which are available to institutions facing retrenchment challenges. While many institutional leaders view financial exigency as the *raison d'être* for retrenchment activities, the authors cite this terminology as little understood and over-utilized. Rather than grasp at panacea definitions of what an exigent institution is the authors present several brief case studies of institutions and systems of institutions which faced retrenchment decision-making in order to provide the reader with the philosophical, political, educational and financial precursors of the reduction, reallocation, and retrenchment decision-making. A brief analysis of the AAUP policy statements on reduction and retrenchment including legal as well as constitutional implications, provides a fitting, although too concise, summary of the issues faced in times of retrenchment.

In the Summary and Conclusions section, Mortimer and Tierney set forth a series of nine statements, or recommendations, which have implications for understanding and dealing with the uncertainties for post-secondary education in the next decade. For those attempting to gain an initial perspective on the alternatives available to colleges and universities in meeting the twin influences of declining enrollments and diminishing resources this publication is a recommended text. It is well written and easy to understand, but of more importance it provides the reader with a wealth of reference sources for further study.

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