

Elliott, William, III.. The real college debt crisis: how student borrowing threatens financial well-being and erodes the American dream, by William Elliott III with Melinda K. Lewis. Praeger, 2015. 250p bibl index afp ISBN 9781440836466, \$48.00; ISBN 9781440836473 ebook, contact publisher for price.

With student debt at an estimated \$1.2 trillion (right up there with auto loans), college tuition growing faster than anything in the consumer market except tobacco products, and economists scratching their collective heads over the costs and benefits of higher education (and whether a college education mitigates or exacerbates inequality), the supply of new books on these topics in recent years has skyrocketed. Into this morass dive Elliott and Lewis, two Univ. of Kansas social welfare academics. Starting with a 13-page introduction, which is basically an executive summary, and across ten chapters, the authors explain through the lenses of their personal lives the evolution of the US financial aid system, with its reliance on student indebtedness; assess its unattractive outcomes; and offer a better alternative—Children’s Savings Accounts—for the 21st century. The important, but narrow, focus of this book limits its appeal and value, but in discussions of American higher education today—including for-profit institutions, MOOCs and their spinoffs, governance, and technological changes—these authors and their thesis deserve a seat at the table. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through professionals and practitioners; general readers.