

## **Edumeter: Why It's Needed**

*[Trend analysis]*

Higher education is in a time of rapid systemic change. Increasingly in the United States, a bachelor's degree is seen as a minimum qualification for even low-paying, low-prestige jobs. The social emphasis placed on going to college as the only path to success means universities and colleges are flooded every year with ever-rising attendance levels, at the same that public institutions are feeling the effects of decades of funding cuts to education on both the state and federal level. Class sizes expand, while many well-qualified academics go under-employed. Tuition rates are skyrocketing, as schools rely increasingly on student fees, and in response student debt has climbed to a level never before seen in history.

Many students choose to partially unbundle their own education by attending a cheaper community college for their initial studies, in the hope of transferring credits to a four-year university. Online classes are increasingly popular, offering some of the learning content of a traditional class without the need for building space or the physical presence of an instructor. Notable private institutions have begun to offer a handful of popular courses online for free, in exchange for user data. Websites preaching the merits of "hacking" one's own education have sprung up.

At the same time, academics are increasingly called upon to prove their value to their employers not through the decades-old practices of tenure - which provides a level of job security many beginning instructors are unlikely to attain any time soon - but through high rates of publication and citation, with individual networking and self-promotion increasingly an unofficial job duty for those who wish to succeed in their field.