



The Five-Year Party: How Colleges Have Given Up on Educating Your Child and What You Can Do About It

Craig Brandon

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ForeWord Book of the Year Award winner

"*The Five-Year Party* provides the most vivid portrait of college life since Tom Wolfe's 2004 novel, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*. The difference is that it isn't fiction. The alcohol-soaked, sex-saturated, drug-infested campuses that Mr. Brandon writes about are real. His book is a roadmap for parents on how to steer clear of the worst of them.... *The Five-Year Party* is a useful handbook for parents to pack when they take their teenager on a college tour, and its list of suggested questions is smart. My favorite: How many of the school's professors send their own children there?"

—The Wall Street Journal

"High costs and debt, insufficient instruction, dangerous campuses, and poor job prospects: for too many students, a five-year college party often turns into a lifelong nightmare. *The Five-Year Party* is packed with illuminating stories and details about this crisis situation, and helps readers to avoid the dangers and get the most for their money."

—Marc Scheer, author, *No Sucker Left Behind: Avoiding the Great College Rip-Off*

"In one dismaying and maddening episode and circumstance after another, Craig Brandon's survey of college campuses sounds a vital warning for parents: 'The institutions and administrators you trust to foster and guide your children's formation are more interested in their pocketbooks than their intellects. Buyer beware!'"

—Mark Bauerlein, author of *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*

"After reading only a few pages of *The Five-Year Party*, I immediately started telling people about its important message. This crucial book exposes the consumer mentality now all too prevalent on college campuses, detailing how higher education has given students what they want at the expense of giving them what they need to compete in the global marketplace. Even better, the book tells parents and educators how this nefarious trend can be circumvented. Any parent who wants their college-bound teen to actually learn something for their heaps of tuition money should read this book."

—Jean M. Twenge, author of *Generation Me* and co-author of *The Narcissism Epidemic*

"With broad, unforgiving strokes, Craig Brandon paints a dark picture of residential college life that will give every parent pause before sending a child off to any of his 'Party Schools.'"

—Barrett Seaman, author of *Binge: Campus Life in an Age of Disconnection and Excess*

Colleges look much the same as they did five or ten years ago, but a lot has changed behind the scenes. While some mixture of study and play has always been part of college life, an increasing number of schools have completely abandoned the idea that students need to learn or demonstrate that they've learned. Financial

pressures have made college administrations increasingly reluctant to flunk anyone out, regardless of performance, although the average length of time to get a degree is now five years, and for many students it's six or more. Student evaluations of professors—often linked to promotion and tenure decisions—have made professors realize that applying tough standards, or any standards, only hurts their own career progress. For many professors, it's become easier and more rewarding to focus on giving entertaining lectures and to give everyone reasonably good grades.

The worst of these schools are the "subprime" colleges, where performance standards and accountability have been completely abandoned. Students enjoy a five year party with minimal responsibilities while their parents pay the bills. These schools' investment decisions (first-class gyms and dining centers) are all geared to attracting students that want to have a good time, and their brochures all emphasize the fun aspects of the college experience—there are very few pictures of students actually studying or in class. And after graduation, former students are frequently unable to find work in their chosen fields, thanks to their school's reputation with employers, and unable to afford the payments on sizable student loans.

The subprime colleges, which "teach" a significant percentage of college students, are only the tip of the iceberg. All colleges, even the most elite, have moved in this direction to some extent. If you are a parent sending your child to college, "The Five-Year Party" will give you critical information you need about what is really happening at your child's college, and what you can do to ensure help your child gets a real education.

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Charles Baker:

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