

NATIONAL REVIEW

For-Profit Higher Ed Has Gotten a Bad Rap

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The Obama administration went to great lengths to demonize and tear down for-profit higher education. Department of Education officials succeeded in destroying some of the biggest providers and creating the impression that the whole sector was a scam.

Countering that idea, Professor William Shughart (Utah State) and Jayme Lemke (Mercatus Institute) have contributed a chapter to a new Cato Institute book entitled *Unprofitable Schooling*. Shughart and Lemke take an objective look at the for-profit sector and find that there were some solid reasons why students preferred for-profits over government-run schools and benefited from their choice. In today's [Martin Center article](#), I write about their analysis.

For one thing, the for-profits are usually more accessible to students. They can begin studies when they're ready, and the for-profits make it far easier for people who aren't educationally savvy to get help. For another, students can complete their course of study in less time and therefore get into their jobs sooner.

Shughart and Lemke favor a true free market in higher education, but unfortunately we don't have anything close to that due to federal subsidies and intervention. Their conclusion is right on target:

Ultimately, to introduce competition over cost and quality into the higher education sector requires more student choice and a transition to a system in which the true costs of college are borne by those who are in a position to evaluate whether the purchase is worthwhile—students and their parents, not the regulators.