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Secretly Happy Colleges Should Mean Overtly Angry Taxpayers

Posted By [Neal McCluskey](#) On February 10, 2011 @ 1:33 pm In [Education and Child Policy](#), [Tax and Budget Policy](#) | [Comments Disabled](#)

Yesterday, House Republicans [introduced their preliminary list](#) ^[1] of spending cuts, cuts that were, they declared, "to go deep." Unfortunately, coming in at just \$74 billion, they were about as deep as onion skin. After all, the total federal budget is well over \$3 *trillion*, and the national debt now exceeds \$14 *trillion*.

The relatively lilliputian size of the proposed cuts should give any taxpayer major queasiness over Republicans' desire to truly rein in government. But if that doesn't scare you, [this report](#) ^[2] from *Inside Higher Ed* absolutely should:

Shhh. Don't tell, and they'll never admit it publicly. But college officials are (very quietly) feeling okay -- at least for now -- about how Congressional Republicans would treat the programs that matter most to higher education in their first whack at the federal budget.

Why should ivory tower denizens be secretly peppy, and taxpayers openly upset? Because the House GOP pretty much left higher ed funding untouched, despite the fact that the ivory tower is soaking in putrid, taxpayer-funded waste. Quite simply, the federal government pours [hundreds of billions of dollars](#) ^[3] into our ivy-ensconced institutions every year, but what that has largely produced is atrociously low [graduation rates](#) ^[4]; at-best [dubious amounts of learning](#) ^[5] for those who [do graduate](#) ^[6]; ever-fancier [facilities](#) ^[7]; and [rampant tuition inflation](#) ^[8] that renders a higher education no more affordable to students but keeps colleges fat and happy.

I've [said it before](#) ^[9] and I will say it again: If federal politicians won't significantly cut "education" spending -- spending that has done next to nothing to increase *actual learning* -- then they are not serious about reining in the deficit or cutting government down to size. They are still, sadly, much more concerned about appearing to "care" about education than doing what needs to be done.

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URLs in this post:

[1] introduced their preliminary list : http://appropriations.house.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressReleases.Detail&PressRelease_id=259

[2] this report : http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/02/10/house_budget_cutters_would_treat_most_higher_education_programs_gently

[3] hundreds of billions of dollars : http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_373.asp?referrer=list

[4] graduation rates: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_331.asp?referrer=list

[5] dubious amounts of learning : <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/09/133310978/in-college-a-lack-of-rigor-leaves-students-adrift>

[6] do graduate: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/24/AR2005122400701.html>

[7] facilities: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/05/us/jacuzzi-u-a-battle-of-perks-to-lure-students.html>

[8] rampant tuition inflation : http://trends.collegeboard.org/downloads/college_pricing/Excel/Table%205.xls

[9] said it before : http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=12734

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