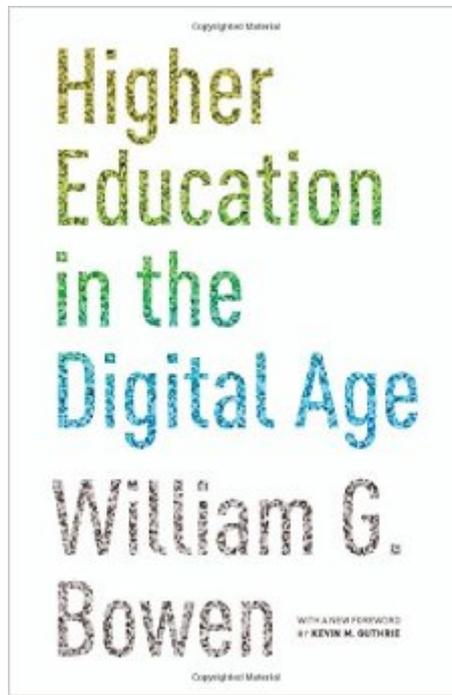


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# Higher Education In The Digital Age



## Synopsis

Two of the most visible and important trends in higher education today are its exploding costs and the rapid expansion of online learning. Could the growth in online courses slow the rising cost of college and help solve the crisis of affordability? In this short and incisive book, William G. Bowen, one of the foremost experts on the intersection of education and economics, explains why, despite his earlier skepticism, he now believes technology has the potential to help rein in costs without negatively affecting student learning. As a former president of Princeton University, an economist, and author of many books on education, including the acclaimed bestseller *The Shape of the River*, Bowen speaks with unique expertise on the subject. Surveying the dizzying array of new technology-based teaching and learning initiatives, including the highly publicized emergence of "massive open online courses" (MOOCs), Bowen argues that such technologies could transform traditional higher education--allowing it at last to curb rising costs by increasing productivity, while preserving quality and protecting core values. But the challenges, which are organizational and philosophical as much as technological, are daunting. They include providing hard evidence of whether online education is cost-effective in various settings, rethinking the governance and decision-making structures of higher education, and developing customizable technological platforms. Yet, Bowen remains optimistic that the potential payoff is great. Based on the 2012 Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered at Stanford University, the book includes responses from Stanford president John Hennessy, Harvard University psychologist Howard Gardner, Columbia University literature professor Andrew Delbanco, and Coursera cofounder Daphne Koller.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Throughout the past several years, education as a whole has been changing at a rapid pace. Specifically, the most significant changes have occurred in the field of higher education. This era of higher education is commonly referred to as the digital age, mostly due to the rise of massive open online courses (MOOCs), online, and hybrid degrees. A major contribution to the aforementioned rise is the snowballing cost of higher education. Students simply need cheaper ways to receive college degrees. Is there an answer for what William Bowen refers to as the cost disease? His book, *Higher Education in the Digital Age*, attempts to answer that question through a general evaluation of the developing technologies and introduction of current and future debates. Bowen is a former president of Princeton University and the Mellon Foundation, and holds a level of expertise in the field that is rivaled by few individuals. The bulk of the writing within these pages is based on the Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Stanford University in 2012. He explains why he thinks technology has the potential to really bring the costs back to where they should be without harming the purpose of higher education: learning. Bowen recognizes that the time of simply sitting in a classroom and listening to a professor lecture is slowly coming to an end, but he hopes not completely. Therefore, his wish is that higher education moves toward an integration of what both the past and newer technologies have to offer. In the very short history of MOOCs, academic leaders, including Bowen, have seen how education can be affordable. In my opinion, this revelation was terrifying for many of them at first, but now I think some are opening up to the trend.

William Bowen, president emeritus of Princeton University, has been a respected voice in higher education for some time and in this book tries to shed light on the issues facing higher education during the rise of the digital age. This book was derived from the Tanner lectures that took place in 2012 at Stanford. He starts off by stating that there is a disease in Higher Education and this disease is one of cost. This cost problem is due to the difficulty in increasing productivity in the classroom without surrendering quality. In most industries productivity and quality can be increased as advanced technology becomes available. In education this is a very difficult task because humans are not like cars and cannot be educated in the style of an assembly line (not for lack for lack of trying). Bowen does not pretend to know how to fix the cost problem and instead helps the reader understand where education has been going due to the issue. So where is it going? Online

education, MOOCs, OCW are terms associated with digitally based higher education that are taking over the classroom or creating brand new cyber ones. Bowen sees this rise as inevitable. It is interesting that Bowen does not try to create a defense against the encroaching tide of technology that is changing the landscape of education. These changes are an inevitable response to the "cost disease" and some he will argue, bring good things to the table. He does call for one thing consistently and that is the preservation of certain things which have made higher education special and worthwhile to generations of students. One example is what Bowen calls "minds rubbing against minds" (p. 68), or humans who interact and are educated hand in hand.

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