College for the Commonwealth
A Case for Higher Education in American Democracy
Michael T. Benson and Hal R. Boyd
Foreword by E. Gordon Gee

"Benson and Boyd present a convincing case for why higher education needs and deserves public support. From practical examples they demonstrate how investment in higher education enables a society to rise to the opportunities presented by the future. Their argument is focused on Kentucky, but its lessons are as applicable to the United States as a whole." —Daniel Walker Howe, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848

In the past decade, states across the nation have cut higher education spending per student by more than 15 percent. Kentucky has experienced some of the largest cuts in the country, leading many to claim that higher education is in a state of crisis. In spite of this turmoil, however, Kentucky’s remarkable institutions of higher education stand more capable than ever to prepare new generations for the challenges and opportunities of their time.

Collage for the Commonwealth illustrates how colleges and universities are the sustaining lifeblood of civil society and that when these vital institutions are underfunded, both the community and economy suffer. Michael T. Benson and Hal R. Boyd examine the historical origins of higher education in America and analyze the benefits of postsecondary education through the lens of Kentucky. Presented as a practical yet persuasive look at why America needs thoughtful reinvestment in its colleges and universities, this study details how helping students can help sustain a healthy, democratic social fabric while bolstering the modern economy. Gathering examples and offering solutions for postsecondary institutions, this work serves as a call to action and a roadmap for educators, administrators, and government officials.

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"Michael T. Benson and Hal R. Boyd have written a thought-provoking book, the subject of which is both timeless and timely. A must-read for political and corporate leaders, it might convince them that the old adage, ‘you get what you pay for,’ applies to education, too!" —Lindsey Apple, author of Cautious Rebel: A Biography of Susan Clay Sawitzky