



Palace of Ashes: China and the Decline of American Higher Education

By Mark S. Ferrara

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In addition to possessing the world's largest economies, China and the United States have extensive higher education systems comparable in size. By juxtaposing their long and distinctive educational traditions, *Palace of Ashes* offers compelling evidence that American colleges and universities are quickly falling behind in measures such as scholarly output and the granting of doctoral degrees in STEM fields. China, in contrast, has massed formidable economic power in support of its universities in an attempt to create the best educational system in the world.

Palace of Ashes argues that the overall quality of U.S. institutions of higher learning has declined over the last three decades. Mark S. Ferrara places that decline in a broad historical context to illustrate how the forces of globalization are helping rapidly developing Asian nations—particularly China—transform their major universities into serious contenders for the world's students, faculty, and resources.

Ferrara finds that American institutions have been harmed by many factors, including chronic state and federal defunding, unsustainable tuition growth, the adoption of corporate governance models, adjunctification, and the overall decline of humanities education relative to job-related training. Ferrara concludes with several key recommendations to help U.S. universities counter these trends and restore the palace of American higher learning.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Interesting, provocative, and original. Ferrara adopts a progressive position to critique neoliberal trends while also defending the humanities and liberal learning more generally."

(Robert A. Rhoads, University of California–Los Angeles, coauthor of *China's Rising Research Universities: A New Era of Global Ambition*)

"... provocative... What makes Mark Ferrara's book intriguing is the comparative study of Chinese higher education traditions and the current situation of Chinese universities."

(*American Association of University Professors*)

About the Author

Mark S. Ferrara is an associate professor of English at the State University of New York. He is the author of *Barack Obama and the Rhetoric of Hope* and the coeditor of *Between Noble and Humble: Cao Xueqin and the Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Users Review

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Jeffrey Smith:

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Alan Levin:

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