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WAYS & MEANS

State Spending on Higher Education Has Remained Steady, Despite Claims to the Contrary, Report Says

By PETER SCHMIDT

Reports of the death of state support for public higher education may have been exaggerated.

In fact, overall state spending on higher education has generally kept pace with enrollment growth and inflation over the past three decades, despite temporary lags during recessions, according to a report released last week by the State Higher Education Executive Officers, which represents top state higher-education officials.

"The fundamental message of this report is that the sky is not falling," says Paul E. Lingenfelter, executive director of the Denver-based group and a principal author of the report.

On the whole states were spending about as much per public-college student, in constant dollars, in the 2003 fiscal year as they were in 1970, even though enrollments nearly doubled during that period.

The full text of the report is available on the Web (<http://www.sheeo.org/finance/shef.pdf>, requires [Adobe Reader](#), available free).

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