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**Report: Federal aid increasing cost of college**

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College students are again facing increases in tuition and college costs this year, and increased federal spending might be attributing to the problem, according to a new report.

According to the report issued by the National Center for Policy Analysis tuition prices at colleges and universities across the U.S. have been increasing for the past 30 years.

From the 1979-80 school year to the 2009-10 school year, average tuition prices have increased a staggering 175 percent for private four-year universities and 220 percent for public universities, said Courtney O'Sullivan, the editor of the National Center for Policy Analysis, a conservative think-tank based in Dallas.

Chuck Pruitt, the president of the University of Wisconsin System [Board of Regents](#), said there is no question over the past 20 to 25 years costs have gone up for a variety of reasons including rising inflation and healthcare costs.

O'Sullivan said federal financing of college costs is the main reason for tuition increases.

The average amount of federal student loans increased 180 percent from 1990 to 2008 after adjusting to inflation, according to the report.

As a result, the portion of average tuition at a public four-year university financed by federal student loans increased from 60 percent in 1999 to 75 percent in 2009.

"College costs will definitely continue to rise if federal aid is still in the picture," says O'Sullivan.

The rising cost of a college education is due to increased financial aid available rather than any general improvement in the quality of education, according to the report.

However, Pruitt said he was not convinced increased federal funding is contributing to rising costs and would have to see more data on the subject.

Pruitt added there has been a positive trend of the government providing more financial aid for students through programs like the national Pell grants which provides students with need based financial grants.

Although schools across the country continue to increase tuition prices, universities are spending more on providing the “college experience” rather than improving educational programs, according to the report.

“Colleges aren’t focusing on the end product for students, they’re spending their money on providing the best college experience for their students,” O’Sullivan said.

According to the report the ratio of teachers to students at these universities has remained stable despite these tuition increases; about seven teachers per 100 students at most universities from 1976 to 2000.

O’Sullivan said schools are not increasing their staff, so money is being spent more on faculty research and providing non-instructional activities, rather than student education.

Schools are building lavish unions, first rate gym facilities and expensive high-tech support centers, according to the report.

The NCPA report also said universities are also spending more money per degree awarded.

Private universities have increased spending on education and related spending per degree by 36 percent. Spending at public universities also increased, from \$53,261 per degree in 1995 to \$56,743 in 2006.

According to the report one reason for this cost increase is because students are taking longer to graduate.

— *David Brazy contributed to this report.*