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Eco Discussion 1**Eco Discussion**

Name

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Eco Discussion

Question A: Does the high fixed cost for higher education institutions tend to be larger or smaller? What are the variable expenses associated with colleges and universities?

Higher learning institutions have relatively inflexible expenses by nature. Fixed costs include infrastructure costs, campus facilities, administrative salaries, and maintenance costs, which do not change with increases or declines in student enrollment (Dean et al., 2020). These types of costs are fixed and are typically the most significant financial obligations. Variable costs for colleges and universities would be any cost that changes based on the number of enrollments. These include instructional costs, such as salaries for adjunct faculty, classroom supplies, utilities, and student services like dining or health facilities. The number of students increases or decreases, and the variable costs surge or come down accordingly, while fixed costs remain the same.

Question B: Given your answer to A, describe the immediate average total cost.

In the brief run, the average total cost per student is determined by how fixed and variable costs are distributed among the student population. Immediately, as the number of students increases, fixed costs are divided over a higher number of students, which lowers the ATC because of economies of scale. Thus, the downward slope in the short-run average total cost curve is created. In other words, once an optimal enrollment level is attained, further additions to the student body will begin to stretch the resources and create diseconomies of scale, where average costs once again rise. This U-shaped curve reflects a balance between efficient use of resources and capacity overextension.

Question C: What impact will a decline in enrollments have on the average cost per student of higher education if universities are operating at the point where their short-term average total costs are diminished?

Because institutions operate at the point where short-run average total costs are diminished, falling enrollment will increase the typical cost per student. This, of course, is because some costs are fixed, and with fewer students, these costs are divided among fewer, thus raising the cost for each. For example, maintaining campus facilities and administrative salaries would remain constant even if fewer students were enrolled. This puts universities under pressure to find ways to offset increasing costs per student by slashing variable costs of course offerings or staff (Ward, 2022). However, this directly impinges upon the quality of education and services. Alternatively, colleges might seek additional sources of revenue by expanding online programs, recruiting international students, or offering new certifications and professional development courses to balance their budgets.

Reference

Dean, E., Elardo, J., Green, M., Wilson, B., & Berger, S. (2020). The Structure of Costs in the Short Run. Retrieved from [openoregon.pressbooks.pub](https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/socialprovisioning2/chapter/10-2-the-structure-of-costs-in-the-short-run/) website:

<https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/socialprovisioning2/chapter/10-2-the-structure-of-costs-in-the-short-run/>

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<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-022-09723-6>