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“In this **fascinating study**, education journalist Tough (*How Children Succeed*) argues persuasively that access to an elite college education, which in the U.S. is popularly believed to be a meritocratically distributed social equalizer, is in fact distributed in ways that reinforce existing economic divisions... **His analyses of data are sound, his portraits of students and teachers sympathetic, his argument neatly structured, and his topic one with wide appeal. This well-written and persuasive book is likely to make a splash.**” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Tough’s work offers an indictment of American society and political structures and persuasively argues that universities must fulfill the American commitment to equality of opportunity.”
—**STARRED** review, *Library Journal*

“Tough clearly shows that college placement remains mostly about wealth at the expense of a collective educational environment. A good choice for aspiring college students and their parents.”
—*Kirkus Review*

THE YEARS THAT MATTER MOST

How College Makes or Breaks Us

BY PAUL TOUGH

The *New York Times* best-selling author of *How Children Succeed* returns with a powerful, mind-changing inquiry into higher education in the United States

Does college still work? Is the system designed just to protect the privileged and leave everyone else behind? Or can a college education today provide real opportunity to young Americans? *New York Times* bestselling author **Paul Tough**’s new book **THE YEARS THAT MATTER MOST** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, September 10, 2019) delivers fresh, fascinating insight on how the American system of colleges and universities helps and hinders young people, especially low-income and first-generation students.

Tough tells the stories of students trying to find their way, with hope, joy, and frustration, through the application process and into college. Drawing on new research, and on dozens of in-depth visits to college campuses across the country, the book reveals how the landscape of higher education has shifted in recent decades and exposes the hidden truths of how the system works

THE YEARS THAT MATTER MOST: How College Makes or Breaks Us * By Paul Tough
*Publication Date: September 10, 2019 * \$28.00 hardcover * ISBN 978-0-544-94448-0*

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and for whom. And it introduces the people who really make higher education go: admissions directors trying to balance the class and balance the budget, College Board officials scrambling to defend the SAT in the face of mounting evidence that it favors the wealthy, researchers working to unlock the mysteries of the college-student brain, and educators trying to transform potential dropouts into successful graduates.

Tough's intimate and insightful reporting:

- Reveals how in recent years the country's most selective colleges and universities have been steadily admitting more and more very wealthy students and fewer and fewer poor and working-class ones – all while trying to convince the public that the opposite is happening.
- Goes behind the scenes in college admissions offices to show how competition for tuition dollars leads colleges to admit affluent students they would rather turn down – and then to offer them increasingly large discounts and aid packages in order to land them.
- Shows how low-income students, in the rare cases when they are admitted to elite colleges, often feel overwhelmed and beaten down on campus – not by the academic demands, but by the culture shock of being surrounded by so much concentrated wealth and privilege.
- Describes groundbreaking efforts taking place across the country to guide students conscientiously through the admissions process and into college, and then keep them on track for success once they arrive.
- Explores the many shapes that college in America takes today, from Ivy League seminar rooms to community college welding shops; from giant public flagships to tiny experiments in urban storefronts.

THE YEARS THAT MATTER MOST inspires and surprises on every page. It will change the way readers think —not just about higher education, but about the nation itself.

Paul Tough is the author of three previous books, including **HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED: *Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character***, which has been translated into 27 languages and spent more than a year on the *New York Times* hardcover and paperback best-seller lists. Paul is a contributing writer to the *New York Times Magazine*, where he has written extensively about education, parenting, poverty, and politics. His journalism has also appeared in the *New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *GQ*, and *Esquire*; on the public-radio program *The American Life*; and on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. He lives with his wife and two sons in Austin, Texas, and Montauk, New York.

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