

Headline English

2011, week 51 *Learn English through reading on current world affairs*

1 **University challenge**

2 original at

3 <http://www.economist.com/node/21541398>

4 With ex-students' debts approaching \$1 trillion, American universities
5 need urgent reform. But calm reflection is needed too. America's
6 universities suffer from many maladies besides cost. And rising costs are
7 often symptoms of much deeper problems: problems that were irritating
8 during the years of affluence but which are cancerous in an age of
9 austerity.

10 The first problem is the inability to say "no". For decades American
11 universities have been offering more of everything—more courses for
12 undergraduates, more research students for professors and more rock
13 walls for everybody—on the merry assumption that there would always be
14 more money to pay for it all.

15 The second is Ivy League envy. The vast majority of American universities
16 are obsessed by rising up the academic hierarchy and becoming a bit
17 more like Yale. Ivy League envy leads to an obsession with research. This
18 can be a problem even in the best universities: students feel short-
19 changed by professors who spend most of their time writing scientific
20 articles, often of dubious quality. The time wasted writing articles that will
21 never be read cannot be spent teaching. In "Academically Adrift" Richard
22 Arum and Josipa Roksa argue that over a third of America's students show
23 no improvement in critical thinking or analytical reasoning after four years
24 in college.

25 Many universities' first instinct will be to batten down the hatches and wait
26 for this storm to pass. But the storm is not going to pass. The higher-
27 education industry faces a stark choice: either adapt to a rapidly changing
28 world or face a future of cheeseparings. American universities need to be
29 more businesslike and save on costs wherever they can.

Questions

- 1) What is, according to the article, the main reason why US universities need reform?
- 2) Is this main problem something new?
- 3) What are the other problems faced by American universities according to the article?
- 4) What is the 'Ivy League' (line 15) and what is 'Yale' (line 17)?
- 5) What are the results of teachers not paying enough attention to students at universities?
- 6) What is the likely reaction of most US universities to the need for reform?
- 7) What is your opinion on the higher education sector? Do you think that becoming more 'business-like' (line 29) is the answer to problems related to costs? Is this, in your view, also something that Czech universities should be striving for?

Vocabulary

maladies (line 6) – any undesirable or disordered conditions; a problems or issues

affluence (line 8) –) – abundance of money, property, and other material goods; riches; wealth

austerity (line 9) – reduced availability of luxuries and consumer goods, especially when brought about by government policy; strict economy

batten down the hatches (line 25) – to prepare to meet an emergency or face a great difficulty

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

