The Financial System in the Economy

Peter S. Rose



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Special Edition for The American College

To My Family

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As in the first edition, this book is an attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the American financial system and of the major financial markets that make up that system. The financial system of the United States is certainly one of the world's great wonders—the envy of many less well-endowed nations. But it is also a very complex institution—fully understood by few, yet vital to all. As the first chapter of this new edition sets out, the system of financial markets performs several indispensable functions (roles) in a modern market-oriented economy. It provides a profitable and relatively low-risk outlet for the public's savings. Equally important, the financial system generates a continuing supply of credit for businesses, consumers, and governments to fuel both consumption and investment spending. It offers a means to store purchasing power for the future as well as means to raise immediately spendable funds by liquidating stocks. bonds, and other financial assets. The system of financial markets offers services that protect people and property against risk and provides a means to make payments for desired purchases of goods and services. Finally, the financial system offers a channel for the pursuit of government policies designed to move the nation closer to its broad economic goals of full employment, the avoidance of severe inflation, sustainable economic growth, and stability in the nation's international payments position.

Neither the roles of the financial system nor the nation's broad economic goals are easy to accomplish. Indeed, both the American and the global financial systems have many problems today, especially in their efforts to handle huge volumes of government debt, increasingly intense competition for financial services that readily cuts across national boundaries, deregulation of the financial sector with accompanying increases in uncertainty and risk, and a recent dramatic increase in failures among major financial institutions (particularly among banks, thrift institutions, and securities dealers). Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by modern financial systems is whether they can continue to perform their essential functions effectively even if there is a gradual erosion of public confidence in the viability and stability of important financial institutions. For without a strong consensus of public confidence and active participation from businesses, households, and governments at all levels, the financial system will begin to contract on itself, eroding its efficiency until it can no longer perform effectively its vital roles in the economy. Indeed, public confidence is the foundation stone upon which all financial systems are built and, without which, they cannot long survive—a truism that we will return to again and again in the pages of this book.

It is always incumbent upon an author to explain how this new edition differs from the one that preceded it. There is one *new* chapter in this edition—Chapter 11, which deals with the forecasting and hedging of interest rates in today's volatile and risk-laden economy. In addition, the sequence of chapters and of material within selected chapters has been altered in order to improve the logical flow of the book. For example, the reader familiar with the first edition will note that the original Chapter 10, Sources of Information for Financial Decision Making, has been moved forward into Part One of this new edition. This was done so that readers of the book will become aware at an early stage about where much of the data about the financial system (such as the vital Flow of Funds Accounts) comes from and how that data is assembled and used.

Changes in content and format appear in all 29 chapters of this new edition. For example, each chapter now contains an introductory information section, explaining to the reader the purpose of that chapter and giving a list of key terms and concepts to watch for in digesting the material. Homework problems now appear at the end of many of the chapters, along with the familiar study questions, to help the reader review the most relevant material. In the narrative portion of all the chapters, figures and charts have been updated to the latest available information as this new edition went to press.

New topics and concepts of special importance in today's financial system have been added throughout the text. For example, new material addresses the wider use of options and hedging strategies by major institutional investors in the money and capital markets. There is a more complete treatment of the characteristics of money market funds and of their potent impact on the sources and uses of funds by deposit-type financial institutions. Discussion of the role of important financial institutions considered in the first edition has been expanded here—especially the discussions of security dealers, investment banks, mortgage banks, real estate investment trusts, leasing companies, and financial conglomerates (symbiotics), such as Sears, Roebuck & Company and Prudential-Bache. The unfolding theory of rational expectations is an important new addition to the review of interest-rate theories in Chapter 7. An expanded discussion of the theory and concepts dealing with the inflation/interest-rate linkage and the yield curve have been added to Chapter 9. This chapter also contains a new section on duration and its uses.

There are more numerical examples throughout the book, such as explicit calculation of after-tax yields to maturity, yields on callable securities, real interest rates, and the mathematics of compound interest. New developments in each major financial market, including the appearance of new financial instruments, have been added where relevant to the flow and development of ideas. A good example is Chapter 18 where several important consumer-oriented financial services—Super NOWs.

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money market deposit accounts (MMDAs), universal life insurance policies, IRAs and Keoghs, and cash-management services—have been added to that chapter's discussion of the latest developments in the consumer market. Other new topics and concepts include consumer bankruptcy laws, inflation-hedged bonds, leveraged buyouts, currency futures, tax reform proposals, contemporaneous reserve accounting, shelf registrations, IS-LM analysis, new money-supply definitions, and the recent "irrelevance" controversy over the effects of government debt and government borrowing.

The new Chapter 11, dealing with interest-rate patterns, forecasting, and hedging, begins by exploring well-established patterns in market interest rates over time—patterns that any student of the financial system needs to know well. The analysis focuses initially on the importance of business-cycle fluctuations and seasonal factors in shaping movements in interest rates and security prices. Then the key benefits and problems in interest-rate forecasting are noted, followed by a step-by-step review of several widely used rate forecasting approaches (e.g., analysis of moneysupply changes, econometric models, the Flow-of-Funds approach, and implied market forecasts). Due to the inherent difficulties of interestrate forecasting many economists and financial analysts have turned to hedging strategies in order to insulate financial transactions from interestrate fluctuations. The new chapter discusses four major rate-hedging devices—duration, GAP management (interest-sensitivity analysis), financial futures contracts, and interest-rate SWAPs—and how they might be used to deal with the dynamic and often treacherous character of modern financial trading.

As with the first edition, a book of the scope and size of this one has benefited from the criticisms, ideas, and information provided by many financial experts and institutions. The author is indebted especially to James C. Baker of Kent State University, Ivan T. Call of Brigham Young University, Eugene F. Drzycimski of the University of Wisconsin, Mona J. Gardner of Illinois State University, Timothy Koch of Texas Tech, David J. Leahigh of Lehigh University, Paul Leonard of Union College, Dixie Mills of Illinois State University, John P. Olienyk of Colorado State University, Coleen C. Pantalone of Northeastern University, and Richard Rivard of the University of South Florida for their review of the entire manuscript and for numerous suggestions to improve it. Organizations graciously providing reprint material or data for the book included the Canadian Banker, official publication of the Canadian Bankers' Association, the American Council of Life Insurance, the Chicago Board of Trade, the Insurance Information Institute, the Credit Union National Association, Dun & Bradstreet, Inc., Moody's Investor Service, the United States League of Savings Associations, the First Boston Corporation, Dow Jones Reprints, and Standard & Poor's Corporation. The author also is grateful

to his family, especially to his wife Kandy Beth, for their patience and encouragement in completing this second edition. As always, however, the errors and deficiencies that remain, along with the personal opinions that appear from time to time in the pages of this book, are the responsibility of the author alone.

Peter S. Rose

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