

Final Report of

**“Privileges Lost, Responsibilities Gained:
Reconstructing Higher Education”**

A Global Symposium on the Future of Higher Education

**Columbia University Teachers College
June 14-15, 2001**

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**The Futures Project: Policy for Higher Education in A Changing World
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Introduction

On June 14 and 15, 2001, 48 international leaders in higher education met at Columbia University Teachers College for a forum titled “*Privileges Lost, Responsibilities Gained: Reconstructing Higher Education.*” The purpose of the forum was to debate and discuss the forces shaping higher education, and to outline a road map for the future. Participants represented more than 20 countries on 6 continents, and while some worked directly in higher education administration, others worked in government, the academy, journalism, and philanthropy.

The forum, jointly sponsored by the Futures Project: Policy for Higher Education in A Changing World (Brown University, USA), the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (Universiteit Twente, The Netherlands), the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (The Open University of Britain), and hosted by Columbia University Teachers College, focused on asking and answering the critical questions facing higher education. While consensus was elusive on some topics, all participants agreed that market forces and the new economy are reshaping higher education in profound ways, that these changes are irreversible, there is no going back, and that they merit serious attention.

Sessions focused on the increasing role of competition and market forces in shaping higher education; the questions that swirl around issues of governance, regulation, autonomy and accountability; and the threats posed to what have historically been viewed as the “core values” of higher education. (For a detailed conference agenda, visit www.futuresproject.org/events/privileges_home.html.)

While the discussion was explicitly framed to include higher education in all forms, it often reverted to issues facing the research university specifically. Though the threats and opportunities facing universities in the U.S. and Europe were discussed at length, participants from the developing world reminded their colleagues that these same forces are affecting the developing countries, but in ways that are quite different from the developed world.

Participants confronted questions that seemed straightforward on their surface: Is market influence good or bad? Should cooperation rule, or competition? Should the state do more, or do less? Participants rejected simple formulae, insisting that the answers to such questions are as complex, contextual, and widely varied as higher education itself.

Still, an action agenda emerged from the conference that cuts across all of higher education, however it is defined and wherever it is located.

First, further examining the influence of the market and of new, non-traditional competitors will help define which elements of this new environment hold promise for improving traditional higher education, and which elements threaten its very foundation.

Second, higher education's leaders have new roles and responsibilities in this new world, and as a result, higher education leadership must be redefined. Further, and perhaps most concerning, it isn't currently clear how and from where this new leadership will emerge.

Third, measuring quality and ensuring accountability are more urgent and challenging than ever as higher education takes new forms; as teaching, learning and research happen in more diverse ways; and as pressures from massification, competition and accountability increase. But precisely *because* of this diffusion of practices and explosion of new organizations, objective, reliable, and transparent barometers for quality and accountability are vitally important. They are the most important means of protecting higher education's consumers and insuring that public investments in higher education are well made and properly stewarded.

Finally – and this bears on the leadership imperative – higher education cannot “rest on its laurels” and be content that its special place in society is well understood and well protected. In a world that is increasingly global, increasingly competitive, and in which new and diverse players are staking their claim in the “industry” of knowledge creation and dissemination, higher education institutions must be prepared to explain, advance, and defend their practices and their unique societal functions. This effort will involve collaboration with key stakeholders in both the public and private sector.

The action agenda is presented in detail in Section 4, The Road Ahead (page 21).

This conference report is divided into four sections:

1. **The Central Themes.**

This section, informed by the conference proceedings, a pre-conference discussion paper, and the results of a questionnaire completed by conference attendees, explores the topics that framed the conference agenda.

2. **The Emerging Consensus.**

This section details the areas of discussion about higher education's current state and future direction where conference attendees voiced considerable agreement.

3. **The Unresolved Questions.**

This section lays out the lingering dilemmas that remained once the conference came to a close. Some result from the widely different ways in which higher education is organized, experienced, and relied upon in different parts of the world. Others are fundamental questions that are simply unanswerable in two days.

4. **The Road Ahead.**

This conclusion section lays out the actions policy makers, higher education leaders, and government officials should consider. It represents the “action agenda” conference attendees recommended that they and others undertake.

We encourage feedback on the document and commentary on its assertions. It is an attempt to capture a lively intellectual conversation, and to keep the conversation going.

Please submit feedback by contacting one of the sponsoring organizations directly, or visiting our web-based Bulletin Board at www.futuresproject.org/board/index.php3.

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1 The Central Themes

Higher Education's Role in the New Economy

The economy has always benefited from higher education: inventions emerged from university laboratories that led to new products and more efficient production, and graduates brought their new knowledge and skills into the workplace. But the impact on the economy was an institutional afterthought: the university's role in education, training and research was in part self-directed, and in part guided by support from the public sector.

All that has changed.

More than ever before, higher education lies at the heart of the new knowledge-based economy, with higher education's core "products" – new discoveries, new graduates, new theories – in hot demand. Companies are reaching into universities and collaborating on research and commercialization of new ideas. They are pressing curriculum development based on industry demands, and prodding institutions to align graduates with "help wanted" ads. Students, eager to attain the skills that lead to jobs in the new economy, are coming to higher education in greater numbers than ever before.

For centuries, discussions about "the market" had little or no place in conversations about higher education. Most universities around the world were state created and state subsidized. Most students were educated at public institutions. Those that were private were not-for-profit institutions whose direction was set by faculty leadership and guided by new frontiers of knowledge.

"I've had entrepreneurs say to me: we're going to take over your world. We're going to eat your lunch." – Arthur Levine

The new economy's demand for workers with specialized skills has led to new competitors in education and new forms of competition among traditional players. Some countries are seeing a shift in public resources, from being allocated directly to the institution, to following the student. In other countries, a new and growing group of for-profit, degree granting institutions is emerging. Some of these seek to replicate the mission and approach of traditional colleges in new, technology-enabled learning environments. Others explicitly reject the broader notions of liberal education and make clear that they exist for two reasons: to serve the job market, and to make money.

Ask the researcher whose lab is outfitted and funded entirely by industry grants, or the high-tech employee who takes courses at Motorola University: the line between the academy and the corporate boardroom is blurring.

Thanks to advances in information technology, the very notion of a classroom is being revisited. Online universities and virtual courses, adding a powerful new dimension to existing correspondence institutions, are enabling students to study with professors a continent away, and to take courses and get degrees from the comfort of their living rooms.

Tertiary institutions that have evolved at a snail's pace for decades, or in some cases even centuries, are scrambling to respond: expanding beyond national borders, joining consortia, forming institutional and corporate partnerships, privatizing ancillary functions and creating for-profit subsidiaries. They are educating a wider variety of students, and are educating students in greater numbers.

“They [the University of Phoenix] have selected only fields where they can make a profit. They do no research...though they are very effective users of research. They do a better job of deploying technology, and certainly do a better job of quality assurance of their educational programs. They are not particularly worried about equity.”

– William Massy

Thanks to the new economy, higher education has finally achieved the central and expansive role in society that it has long sought, but for different reasons than perhaps it expected, or even wanted.

- Is traditional higher education prepared for the spotlight that accompanies center stage?
- Is it prepared to share the stage with competing institutions governed by very different missions and values?
- Can it respond to market-driven changes in ways that improve service and efficiency without compromising quality or abandoning core functions?

The Threats to Higher Education's Core Values

Higher education institutions have traditionally performed unique societal functions that go well beyond the utilitarian notion of preparing young people for the world of work. Universities have been viewed as “special” places where students and scholars operate in communities marked by a respect for open dialogue and a shared quest for truth.

In many countries, the university at its best has also served as home to free and objective scholarship, critical thinking and societal critique, and the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake. These roles are critical throughout the world, but they have proven particularly important in those parts of the world marked by oppressive and ideological regimes that controlled the flow of information.

“It is not in the interest of most companies to encourage a critique of the current ideology – they ARE the current ideology.” - Yoni Ryan

Higher education has traditionally assigned value to a broadly defined educational experience: many colleges and universities are organized as residential

communities that invest young people with a sense of civic discourse and societal obligation over a number of years, and expose students to knowledge and culture both inside and outside the classroom.

Based on both competitive pressures and evolutionary changes, many believe these values, also measured in terms of “unique societal contributions” are at risk. Some

question whether, as the market rises in importance, there will prove to be a “market” for well-educated individuals taught to think critically and seek objective evidence.

“Poverty weakens one’s principles.”

-Michael Shattock

What role, if any, will these values play in the university of the future? Do these values lose relevance if the notion of life-long learning takes hold, and more adult learners populate classrooms? Can values be taught in virtual environments, or only in classrooms with face-to-face interactions between professors and students, and students and each other?

A discussion of higher education’s “core values” must also be broadened to include not only the values imparted to students, but also the values that govern higher education’s role in society.

- Can higher education meet its obligations to expand access, reward academic excellence, and engage in basic research in the face of declining state support?
- In which ways must higher education be open to change, and in which ways must adherence to core values mean it steadfastly resist change?
- How can higher education evolve – and evolve it must – without losing the characteristics that make it special and enable it to make special societal contributions?

“Information technology certificates have become the coin of the realm for people entering the new economy across the world. That entire system is run outside the higher education system: no government has any role, no institution of higher education has any role, unless one of the companies involved hires them to do a particular job. So in a way, a significant part of this has already left the higher education community.”

– Frank Newman

Autonomy and Accountability in Higher Education: Who is In Charge?

Students seeking true comparative measures of, for example, the quality of the engineering program at two institutions have had little guidance beyond institutional reputation.

Policymakers demanding information to help them gauge the

effectiveness of current programs and guide their future investments would be similarly thwarted. Systems for higher education budgeting and for assessing faculty

performance remain a mystery to most, including lawmakers who fund public higher education programs.

The task of assessing quality and measuring performance has become more important and more difficult with the proliferation of new breeds of institutions and degree programs, new course offerings taught only over the Internet, and even whole curricula patched together from faculty at multiple institutions throughout the world.

How, in this atomized environment, can consumers be protected? How can poor scholarship be rooted out and discredited? And how can the stakeholders who invest heavily in education –including the public – hold institutions accountable for delivering on their promises? As campuses reach around the globe and across disciplines, is there any organization or government ultimately responsible?

Despite claims by some in the education sector that higher education is too complex and diverse for meaningful measurements or outcomes assessments, some universities are proving that outcome measurement for some aspects of performance are indeed

“One of the markers of privilege for the higher education sector has been freedom from regulation. The greatest passion in debates relate to academic freedom and autonomy, and the need for these is validated by regulator abuse by those in positions of authority.

“We need to achieve a successful balance between losses and gains. We need predictable regulation and transparent incentives.”

- Mamphela Ramphele

possible, both on an institutional level and in terms of student learning. These innovations hold out the promise of greater transparency and true comparisons across institutions and around the world, but only if their adoption becomes more widespread.

Another important accountability measure is insuring access. In a society where the most important and transferable world currency is knowledge, it is more important than ever that higher education institutions open their doors to non-traditional applicants. Yet many continue to measure themselves based on their ability to compete for and attract the best and brightest students, and to reject more of them and accept fewer of them. In this environment there is a real danger that less capable, less prepared students will have fewer options, higher costs, and a lower quality educational experience. This is particularly true in countries where

the public universities are the most selective but essentially free to those admitted.

- Is the state in a diminished position to demand quality and consumer protection as it diminishes its role as a primary funder of education?
- If so, who will take its place?
- To what extent should colleges and universities be held accountable to other stakeholders, including faculty, students and parents?

2 The Emerging Consensus

Market Forces Are Transforming Higher Education

While the form and rapidity of change in systems of higher education is different in different parts of the world, it is without question, and without exception, that change is happening everywhere. And it is happening in a more fast-moving and fundamental way than ever before.

What is driving this change? It is the increasing role of the market, both in terms of the new competitive environment in which colleges and universities operate, and in terms of the new demands placed on higher education by the knowledge-fueled economy. The market's influence on higher education is further accelerated by the decreasing role of the state in organizing, regulating, and subsidizing higher education, and by the influx of new, non-traditional students into universities and non-degree programs.

While the market's encroachment and the state's retreat both pose significant threats to higher education's traditional practice and mission, both also offer new opportunities that, if harnessed, can result in a more responsive, cost efficient and diverse system. In fact, public officials throughout the world embrace the notion of market forces shaking up traditional higher education, believing that its accompanying pressure will force greater responsiveness and efficiency from change-resistant institutions.

“Higher education is already part of the knowledge economy, and will increasingly be drawn into it -- either on its own terms or on the terms of others -- but higher education does not want to be reduced to being the handmaiden of the economy.”

- Mala Singh, conference summary

Any discussion about whether the market should be “allowed” to influence higher education's future fails to understand that these changes

are already happening, regardless of the ambivalence such transformation engenders. It is pointless for higher education leaders to spend time handwringing or strategizing about halting or reversing this trend.

What is required is constructive, activist engagement around the parameters of market involvement. As the summary presenter Mala Singh put it: “We require a more active negotiation or renegotiation about higher education's role, and the terms of its insertion into and function within the knowledge economy.”

Measuring quality is more important than ever....and it is also harder than ever.

Objectively measuring higher education's quality and assessing the performance of institutions is a daunting task, given the diversity of the sector and the complexity of the product. Nevertheless, measurement and assessment is both possible and important.

Furthermore, if higher education institutions wish to retain their relative autonomy from government regulation and oversight, which we believe they do, then they must consider self-imposed measures of quality, commitments to insuring access, and greater transparency about financing.

Higher education may take on increasingly global characteristics in an increasingly global world, but colleges and universities play a powerful national role in many countries, and uniformity or supra-governance are undesirable goals.

“There must be recognition that the answers to the questions [about higher education’s future] may have common elements, but they are likely to differ based on local needs and conditions. There can not be a search for universal statements...we must attempt to explicate answers that make strategic and pragmatic sense wherever you are located, and whether talking in a regional, national, or global context.”

- Mala Singh, conference summary

Globalization is a factor in higher education, but trends toward globalization do not dictate global solutions, or the creation of global norms for higher education. Higher education institutions may have international reach and may engage in international partnerships, but the notion of international regulation – of quality, of courses, of degree requirements – fails to recognize the unique national and autonomous role of universities.

While there is room for uniform standards in some cases, there is no need for a regulatory body to impose them. The emerging global market is setting de facto standards for professional certification in certain industries (information technology is a ready example). But there are important distinctions between professional certification and education, and it is a strongly held view that educational approach and course content differs across the globe in ways that are important to the preservation of different cultures and cultural identities. Sharing practices and cooperating at new levels internationally are important goals for

higher education; homogeneity and international governance are not.

Higher education leadership is being redefined, and the stakes are high.

“Each institution needs to have a strategy, look at their own flaws, know their allies and stakeholders. It takes real leadership.”

-Frans van Vught

Just as rougher seas demand a more skilled captain at the helm of a ship, volatility and change in higher education demand skilled leadership at the helm of institutions.

For one thing, leaders must be astute enough to understand the changes taking place and to be aware of their implications. For another, if higher education seeks to protect and defend certain core values, leaders

must be prepared to not only act in the defense of those values, but also to demonstrate their practice by example.

“How do you get leadership in the institution prepared to take advantage of competition to achieve public purposes? You can either be defensive -- which is typical -- or you can be very progressive and say: how do we use this competition to correct our flaws?”

- Frank Newman

need to be led and not merely watched over; managed and not merely “administered.”

This poses particular problems, since higher education does not have a historical culture of management, and there are few outlets for leadership training beyond on-the-job experience.

Leaders in higher education need to actively engage key stakeholders, including faculty and students, in the life of the institution and the fixing of its future course.

Cultivating and empowering a new generation of higher education leadership is an important priority for the future.

Finally, as higher education institutions evolve into ever-more complex institutions with international reach, large budgets, and growing accountability, higher education institutions will

“Greater responsibility and accountability must mean less administration and more management: preserving the best of the collegial culture but accepting strategic management...finding that balance.”

- Mamphela Ramphele

The higher education community needs to do a better job of making its case.

“We have to make the core values matter to more than just ourselves, and we need to forge alliances with other social forces to give effect to them.” - Mala Singh

Those involved in higher education may feel secure in their knowledge that they occupy a unique place in society. They are right – conference participants agree that higher education institutions play a vital role in their local, regional, and national communities. They are generators of objective information, educators of tomorrow’s workforce, and are the institutions best positioned to bring attention to practices or policies that are ill-conceived or unfairly executed. They serve as, as one participant put it, “society’s skeptic.”

But it would be a grave mistake to assume that the case has been made to the world, and that the world understands and agrees.

Important attributes long understood and espoused by the academy, notions such as academic freedom, the teaching and modeling of civic communities marked by civil discourse, dispassionate inquiry, and community service, are not regularly articulated by higher education institutions to outside constituencies, and many students see

their tertiary experience as first and foremost about getting a good job and making a good income.

Sounding the alarm about the threats posed by market forces will only resonate if the attributes and values under threat are understood and appreciated by society at large. It is time for higher education leaders and the institutions they lead to work with stakeholders across the spectrum to articulate these unique qualities and contributions and advocate for their protection.

3 The Unresolved Questions

Is the Market a Good, Bad, or Indifferent Influence on Higher Education?

There is no doubt that the market is influencing and reshaping higher education in profound ways, and that this influence takes a variety of forms.

But is the market's impact a good one? Some say yes – that new competitors in higher education, be they for-profit, distance, or others, have forced traditional higher education institutions to examine their own practices and strive for greater efficiency, customer focus, and differentiation. Others say no – that new, market-driven competition is leading institutions to shed functions that are not central to teaching but ARE central to the campus

experience. The broader educational experience needed to prepare students for the role of citizen and those academic disciplines that are important but don't attract lots of students or funding are at risk if universities focus more on the narrow demands of the

economy and on their bottom line. Many argued that both are true: the market can be both a positive force and it can be a damaging one, depending on the terms of engagement and the role the market is allowed to play in shaping institutional priorities.

“The problem with markets is that they are inherently competitive. In a system where there is freedom of entry, there will be competition, and the nature of that competition is that it's a winner-take-all kind of thing. What a market will do is compete away or leach out the space that has been traditionally associated with the University...the space where that liberal humanistic discourse takes place.” - William Massy

Some participants cautioned against a monolithic, all-encompassing notion of “the market” – markets and market demands differ by region, by industry, and by societal expectations.

“The cost of [brain drain] is counted in the thousands of academics from the developing worlds who have come to your country and other parts of the developed world, enhancing and depriving the developing world of needed intellectual resources. There is curious issue at play here where the developing world is actually subsidizing the intellectual capital needs of the developed world, which is reaping the benefits of this brain drain.”

- Mamphela Ramphele

Many from the developing world argued that the market is not the enemy, it is the savior – a crucial partner propping up and supporting higher education institutions that could not survive or thrive without the market's intervention. Further, some argued that the very forms of market influence others decried (namely the shaping of courses and curriculum to meet the needs of the local economy) are an important guarantee of higher education's societal relevance.

On the other hand, many argued that one characteristic of the market is to concentrate by strengths. We are seeing concentration around the globe. What are the dangers of accepting the fact that the Nobel Prize winners will continue to concentrate at the prestigious

research universities, most of which are located in the developed world, meaning that the “brain drain” of intellectual resources of the developing world to the developed world will persist as academics – highly mobile assets – seek out top academic posts? What is the best defense against such concentration?

Many felt that blunting or channeling market forces was an appropriate role for the state to play, particularly around issues of guaranteeing access and protecting consumers. Others cautioned that it may be naïve to view the state as the best defender of the public interest.

Given the profound differences of what higher education is, stands for, and looks like around the globe, is a search for global solutions for higher education’s future ill-advised? Is it dangerous? Where are the appropriate limits to higher education’s globalization?

Some participants from developing nations made clear that the focus in their country was on gearing higher education programs to the local economic context, preferring to build or rebuild systems that can play a direct and immediate role in improving the social and economic conditions of their country. Far from viewing “the market” as the villain, they view private sector interest and investment in higher education as a lifeline for institutions previously supported by the state but which can no longer rely on public resources let alone expand access.

Many participants from elite universities in the developed world agreed with the notion that higher education institutions in countries without a long-established history of investment in higher education are wise to focus on niche programs and local markets – millions of dollars could never create a nuclear physics department that would hope to compete with the Cambridge and Harvard’s of the world. Others bristled at the notion that basic research and the pursuit of new knowledge was a luxury the developing world simply couldn’t afford, and therefore would inevitably become the exclusive domain of leading universities in the developed world. Diversity is important in all things, according to this argument, including knowledge creation.

“Who defines what knowledge is? Somebody has said the next wars will be over semantics. If ‘globalization’ means ‘Americanization’, then I want a war...in countries like the United States, with the great diversity, with amount of money it has, knowledge is created everywhere. But in countries in the south, who’s deciding what is the knowledge what is not the knowledge? The market? The economy? The economy doesn’t know what knowledge is. It knows knowledge when it wants to buy it.”

– Mahdi Elmandjra

Does higher education really have “core values?”

While most participants agreed that freedom of thought and expression and dispassionate inquiry are core values of higher education, opinions differed on whether these values are held by all higher education institutions, or simply by research universities. Should technical institutes serving working adult students, for

example, really be charged with communicating the importance of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, or with creating a campus environment rich with cultural and intellectual opportunities?

Many argued that values are segmented within different parts of the higher education system, and further segmented by culture and geography.

Some participants from former communist countries even took issue with the notion that “freedom of thought and expression” was a universally held value of higher education, arguing that if a society’s government did not value such a notion, it would not be evident in that country’s system of higher education. Others argued the exact opposite point: these values are tested in countries with oppressive governments, but they do exist, and they are more important there than anywhere else.

In addition, many called into question whether higher education’s so-called “values” are truly what is practiced or are merely what is preached – as one participant put it, separating higher education’s “core values” from its “core rhetoric.” (One example of this difference: universities preach the importance of critical thinking, but reward conformity through their systems of grading and testing).

Other fault lines in the value debate included:

- Whether or not universities had a responsibility to teach moral values to students, or whether they could assume this was the family’s role.
- How and whether core values shift when discussing students age 18-22 versus adult, non-residential students.

Despite these enduring questions about core values, participants did agree that one important condition for defending core values is living them. It is not sufficient for higher education to advance tenets it no longer practices, or perhaps never did. Moreover, higher education leaders must model these values in their own behavior and decisionmaking.

How can the elite origins of higher education be reconciled with the dictates of “massification” and broadened access? Is higher education a “public good”?

“We do need to recognize the effects of moving into a mass higher education where we are saying that university access should be open to many who can benefit from it. It is a different world to that when it was a small, elite proportion of the population. We do need the new case.”

- Richard Lewis

In her keynote address, World Bank Managing Director Mamphela Ramphele urged higher education to recognize that preparing for the future will require higher education to be clear about the ways in which its narrow origins shape its current capacities and culture, or as she put it “come to terms with its essentially elitist nature.” Recognizing that higher education has long been the domain of a privileged few, but must be broader and more encompassing in the future, leaders

must consider the unique challenges that will be faced by institutions as they broaden access. She also urged participants to accommodate new entrants who are less well prepared, academically and socially.

Participants agreed that in a global economy where knowledge was easily and readily transferred and where the jobs of the future would rely more on knowledge creation than industrial production, access to higher education is more important than ever. It is important to economic self-sufficiency – for both institutions and for individuals. The student voice of the conference reminded participants that this reality meant governments should be more committed to insuring access and subsidizing the provision of higher education.

But others argued that while it was important to educate individuals from across a society's economic spectrum – both the children of kings and the children of labourers– the realities of capacity would dictate that educational attainment would remain significantly stratified either by class or by capability.

What is the right balance between competition and cooperation in higher education? Cooperation has been a hallmark of public systems of higher education, which has led to some efficiencies but also have perhaps limited choices. In addition, the norms of research internationally have relied on an explicit notion of cooperation – researchers depend upon open access to findings of their peers and predecessors, seeking to build on or disprove data that is publicly available and widely shared.

Competition is changing higher education, not only in terms of new providers and for-profit providers, but also in the forms of public institutions being required to compete for students and resources in light of the declining share of support from the public sector.

“Competition is good between institutions. It leads to higher quality and higher efficiency if you do it right. How do you make them more competitive? Let them compete for resources and compete for clients.” – Frans van Vught

While most participants agreed that greater competition would force a greater alignment between the needs of the academy and the needs and wants of students, many also voiced concern about the impact of intellectual property becoming increasingly privately held and closely guarded. This, they argued, would undercut the basic tenets of academic research. Also concerning participants was a fear that requirements to compete on cost (rather than quality) would endanger low volume disciplines, and would limit opportunities for students with fewer resources or greater academic need.

4. The Road Ahead

The advocacy agenda

Higher education cannot afford to rest on its laurels and assume that society assigns the same value and importance to its unique attributes as the academy does. More importantly, it cannot assume that the market values higher education's unique nature, or even that it understands it.

Higher education must be willing to harness the support of its stakeholders and allies to help define and limit the role the market plays in the provision of

“Have we fallen asleep assuming that we have made this case and we now fail to keep making it?”

– Frank Newman

“We have to make clear that higher education is what produces new ideas and knowledge products that sharpen your competitive edge...we need to remind the market: don't kill the goose that lays the golden egg.”

– William Massy

education and the conduct of research. It must be willing to lobby governments and press for an appropriate state role as an advocate for and protector of higher education.

Effective advocacy, and what some at the conference called “a new case for higher education,” will be greatly enhanced if higher education institutions do not appear to be “fighting the markets” or burying their collective heads in the sand.

It is their role to describe what is at stake, not only to “the new economy” but also to “the new democracy.” The role universities can play in societal development by promoting civic discourse and supplying objective information is critical.

“In my experiences, the advocacy of higher education has been very efficient only when it had a specific purpose...one proposal from my side, in the European context, is to use [as the specific purpose] to enable access for students from a variety of backgrounds; to develop disciplines that do not fundraise well for themselves; to preserve the critical and the objective nature of higher education as the last forum where objectivity to discuss social development is still possible; and as such, to preserve the consciousness of the society.”

- Manja Klemencic

The higher education policy research agenda

Participants agreed that the effects of market forces were profound and far-reaching, but that understanding of these forces and their effect was limited, and not at all systematic. The group suggested the pursuit of a sharper analytical framework, looking at:

MARKET FORCES

- What does the “market” involve, and what about its role concerns us?
- What are the benefits and opportunities afforded by markets?

- If market principles lead to improved efficiencies that improve teaching and other practices, then that is good, but what are the limits of the efficiencies discourse?

DIFFERENCES BY REGION AND WITHIN THE SECTOR

- What are the forces at work on the global, national, institutional level? How do they differ? What are the implications?

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- What are the social contributions of higher education? Can they be measured, and if so, how?
- Which of these contributions are ones made by higher education institutions as well as other institutions, and which are the special ones that only higher education institutions can make? Which of these are actually being compromised, and how do we know?
- Are higher education's contributions unique because institutions "educate", vs. simply "training" or "skilling?" What does that mean? Does that claim relate to an amalgam of information, knowledge skills, understanding, moral and culture sensibilities?

"In many countries we are not confronting 'markets' as if we were the producers of soap powders...what we're actually seeing is a number of influences on higher education...there are market forces in there, but they're not just market forces. For many of us, the biggest pressure is not the University of Phoenix or the private sector: it is governments dealing with competing claims of health and education."

- Richard Lewis

Collaboration between higher education policymakers and academic leaders and sociologists, economists, and political scientists could together help address this area of research.

GLOBAL DIFFERENCES

- There are clear differences in higher education's organization and challenges between the northern and southern hemisphere. How can we contribute to a better understanding of those differences?
- What combination of factors lead to the "brain drain" phenomena, in which the best and brightest minds of the developing world leave their native countries for academic positions or careers in the developed world? How can that trend be stemmed or reversed?

"Brain drain consists of two basic elements: one is the environment and amount of research going on in a field of study, and two is freedom of expression."

- Mahdi Elmandjra

One specific research suggestion was that the funders of the conference enlist UNESCO to work with 30-40 countries, define the nature of the market, and define the benefits and opportunities to higher education as they see them.

Another specific recommended outcome was the convening of a second conference, focused on the same themes but hosted in Asia with a focus on how market forces are transforming higher education in that part of the world. Tentative discussions suggest that this conference may be organized in the next six to nine months in Hong Kong.

Debate and discussion

The higher education community, broadly and globally defined, must engage in discussion about the issues tackled at the conference, if it is to consider systemic responses.

The higher education community must press for solid definitions of “market” and even of “higher education,” and must be sure that if we are to define higher education to include technical institutes, two-year colleges, and other forms of tertiary

“The critical question is who we mean by ‘higher education,’ but I think it is even more critical to identify who we DON’T mean.”

- Peter Darvas

education, that resulting policymaking not apply only to research universities. We must recognize that while research universities may continue to serve as the cornerstone of higher education, in many countries they are not where most people are educated, nor will they be in the future.

We need to engage in what Mala Singh referred to as “the tussle between liberal humanistic discourse (whether it is being preserved or reified or recreated) and market value.” We need to debate the central questions about the market’s new role and the traditions of higher education. As she put it: “Can you have accommodation that does not require the hegemony of one over the other?”

Consensus and Action

Higher education some times eschews the notion of consensus: after all, diversity of thought and opinion is a hallmark of the academy. Yet there are times when leaders from a given sector of society must organize and together stake their claim – or risk losing their place.

Leaders throughout higher education, along with their champions in the public and private sectors, must develop broad agreements about higher education’s core missions and functions that cannot and should not be compromised. They must then build their case to defend such claims, based on arguments grounded in research, not simply what Mala Singh termed “fuzzy notions of specialness.”

Once in agreement, even broad agreement, higher education must launch an advocacy campaign that enables the sector, its institutions, and their leaders to inform the public about what it does and how it does it. The campaign must persuade governments, businesses and other stakeholders that the core values and special contributions that higher education can make need to be supported. For such a campaign to be effective, it must draw in stakeholders that will help demonstrate that protection of these values is about more than self-preservation.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the world, systems of higher education --as well as institutions themselves -- are in the midst of major transformation. Many of these changes are reactive, as institutions struggle to redefine their role in a new environment.

What does this brave new world look like? It is marked by new competitors, and by new technologies that enable different routes to learning and different methods of teaching. It includes a changing role for the state, and market demands that are forcing a new relationship between the traditionally non-profit higher education sector and the for-profit sectors intent on shaping (and in some cases appropriating) higher education's core "products": new graduates, new theories, new knowledge.

While there are real differences in how these factors are playing out around the globe, one remarkable outcome of this diverse and international conference was the uniform affirmation that these same forces are at work everywhere.

The implications of such change are clear. Higher education must define its core functions and the core values and practices that enable them. It must attract a new brand of leadership that can navigate in this new environment, and those leaders must be prepared to defend higher education's unique functions in the context of inevitable engagement with new stakeholders placing new, profit-oriented demands on institutions and systems. It must recognize the increasingly global nature of information and of institutions, but must reject the notion that there is a set of approaches or solutions that can or should be applied globally. And finally, policy makers and academic leaders concerned about this transformation must set about gathering the facts that will help better illuminate the changes taking place, and will lay out the implications for institutions, systems, and even society.

It is as if a train has left the station, but the tracks at the end of the line are still being laid. Where that train will head – and whether it will take us where we need to go – is a central question for all concerned about the future of higher education, and one we cannot afford to lay aside. We must engage in the debate and welcome change. We must also recognize the difference between necessary evolution and crumbling foundations.

Conference attendees disagreed on many points, and offered differing perspectives marked by the different ways in which higher education is organized and experienced in different parts of the world. But attendees came together with one unifying notion, and left with that notion ratified and underscored: change is upon us, there is no going back, and the stakes are high.

“Privileges Lost, Responsibilities Gained: Reconstructing Higher Education”

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