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Remaking the American University: Open for Business

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This book is a slow read because it is smart and provocative. I recommend it more for the intelligence of the authors than for their advice or policies. I waiver between being impressed when the authors make an honest and insightful point and being disappointed by a glib comment derived from their in-your-face marketing attitude. Ultimately, the message seems to be that economic determinism is remaking the American university to produce variants of the University of Phoenix (UOP). Whether you accept the authors' vision, or argue against it, you are likely to feel that your time was well spent in reading a work by scholars who deliver insight instead of familiar and ineffectual sermons. Maybe it is just that instead of a sermon about virtue, the book is closer to a sales pitch. Rather than advocating a return to the faith in higher education as virtue, the authors propose a profound shift in understanding the current and emerging nature of higher education in American culture. This is the book that the recent PBS *Declining By Degrees* wanted to be or should have been.



The Authors

There are many Web resources to acquaint you with Robert Zemsky, including this short interview with the California Higher Education Policy Center: <http://www.capolicycenter.org/ct_1095/ctqa_1095.html>. Gregory R. Wegner worked with Zemsky at the University of Pennsylvania. Both were involved in Pew Foundation programs. See, for example Wegner's "Lessons from the Pew Campus Roundtables" <<http://www.arl.org/arl/proceedings/129/wegner.html>>. Wegner is now the director of program development for the Great Lakes Colleges Association <<http://www.glca.org/main.cfm?location=57&CID=16>>. William Massy taught at Stanford University and now runs the Jackson Hole Higher Education Group, which disseminates some of the advice in the book to leaders in higher education. It also offers a software product (Virtual U) that resembles Sim City to allow players to "step into the decision-making shoes of a university president" <<http://www.virtual-u.org/>>. Thanks to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, you can download the game to discover—if you have the patience—what kind of university president you would make. Because it may not be highly evident to some readers, it is important to notice the elite administrative careers of the authors and their rhetorical skill in offering a version of Modernist science and technique to suggest that they are just reporting objective facts and processes to help people and institutions cope. Rather than replay the us-against-them game between higher education administration and faculty, they redefine the teams to pit monolithic market values against academic nostalgia.

The Customer is Always Right

The authors are interested in policy rather than history, but I appreciate the selective history they offer, which provides contexts to recognize that policy issues are a matter of culture and values as much as money and mechanics. Before examining the chapters, we might inquire why American universities need to become "market-smart and mission-centered." The authors say that "The market for higher education is projected to more than double in size during the next twenty years" (p. 184). Higher education is already very different from what it was even twenty years earlier because of *customer* demand. Between 1973 and 1993, "college enrollment rose by 55 percent" (Bruno). Although they talk a great deal about *customer* demand and market growth, the authors do not explicitly identify the fundamental political and cultural shift in which the Cold War research university changed focus to engage in a different kind of *warfare* where the battles are for markets and customers.

Perhaps the authors do not make this explicit because of the audience they address. They address faculty and others associated with higher education who believe that "colleges and universities are special places fundamentally devoted to the pursuit of public purposes" and for that reason they should be exempt or at least protected by government from the full force of the capitalist marketplace (p. 191). Even in the recent past of the Cold War, "research grants the federal government awarded were seen as investments" in institutions and culture "rather than as purchases" of services and goods (p. 189). On campus, many continue to believe in the intrinsic worth of education, but the authors say we "can no longer expect the public or its political leadership to be particularly moved by the fact that higher education's mission is to educate and conduct research" (p. 195). Zemsky, Wegner,

and Massy shock us when they write, “To assume that the federal government or any other interest holds higher education in abeyance from market forces on the basis of recent memory or longer tradition is to turn a blind eye to the reality of contemporary politics” (p. 196).

The advice of the authors is for “faculty to recalibrate their political rhetoric by” accepting that “public policies no longer sustain their institutions or define their academic values” (p. 191). This is tough stuff for many faculty and administrators to accept. Almost any anthology on higher education policy contains sermons about the inherent virtue of higher education and the necessity to turn back the clock to a time when the public generally accepted this essentially religious view. Consequently, we ask if this is really true about American culture. Are college campuses no longer sacred groves or semi-sacred sanctuaries from the rapacious forces of capitalism? The authors suggest that perhaps they never were sacred. They say that they “hope this present volume helps” explain “how this emerging system of pathways” between the *agora* or marketplace and the acropolis or the temple “actually worked” in the past (p. 54). The irony is that the model of Socrates implies the *agora* more than the acropolis. But, in the Greek *polis*, the *agora* was something more than a capitalist marketplace. It was also, Aristotle told us, a forum for constructing public policy. Still, we need to ask how we got here; to the belief that a college education is more of a private “consumer good” than “a public good” (p. 180). When did we begin “to consider for-profit and traditional institutions as interchangeable” (p. 186) because the only thing that seems to matter “today is how well the student is served” (p. 191)?

1. Introduction: The Diminishing of Public Purpose

Even as recent as “the twenty-five years following the Second World War,” the authors claim that “the American university was expected to play a major role in the pursuit of broad societal goals, a role that no one expects the university to now play” (p. 2). During that period, a large part of the university’s role was the defeat of what President Reagan called “the evil empire” of the Soviet Union. Many science students also came to the university with a near religious faith in scientific knowledge for its own sake. Through the NSF (National Science Foundation), the Federal government became “the principal funder of a scientific revolution that recast the state of knowledge while giving science departments an often dominant voice in the ordering of their universities.” In the late 1960s and early 1970s, campuses became “important staging and recruiting grounds” for social programs such as the protest against the war in Vietnam, for promoting civil rights, and for such government programs as the Peace Corps and components of President Johnson’s Great Society (p. 3).

In the late 1980s and 90s, the foreign threat was no longer Asian Communists and not yet Mideast *jihadis*. We started to buy Japanese cars and by the turn of the century, a degree or college education had largely come to be seen as “a consumer good” in the context of global economic competition (p. 6). Instead of being concerned to save the world, students and their families in the Rust Belt or newly arrived from Mexico were more concerned to economically save themselves. Consequently, “During the last fifty years a college education has come to be perceived as an economic necessity pursued by the many, rather than a privilege reserved for the few” (p. 11). This is the real force that is “remaking the American university.” It is a force beyond the control of those of us on-campus and it threatens to

“remake” the university into a consumer service. The tension is between two views and communities. One view—articulated by the authors—sees the economic needs and desires of consumers who consider the university to be an expensive but necessary service leading to middleclass jobs. The other view—held by faculty and alumni in professions—sees professional standards imperiled by “remaking” the university into a sham of what is and has been. Faculty fear that students may be satisfied customers in the short run, but graduates will lack professional skills, especially in science and engineering fields.

2. The Lattice and the Ratchet

“By the early 1990s [...] money—or rather, its absence—came to absorb each campus” (p. 18). Instead of cutting non-essential staff and programs, the shift of focus to *customers* and markets had the opposite “result—more paper, more procedures, more staff” (p. 21). Even earlier, “academic support personnel filling such roles as financial aid counselors, auditors, research specialists, and systems analysts—had increased by more than 60 percent between 1975 and 1985” while “faculty increased by less than 6 percent” (p. 20). Another work illustrates the shift to academic services. In five years, “between 1994-95 and 1999-2000 the number of full-time-equivalent students increased by thirty-five thousand” in the California State University (CSU) system while the “increase in tenure-track positions during that same period was *one* position” (Meisenhelder, p. 224)! Meisenhelder says that, if the ratio of tenure-track faculty to students that existed in 1994-95 had been maintained, “there would be eleven hundred more tenure-track faculty” rather than one. In contrast, “the numbers in CSU management ranks during this same period increased by 24 percent” (p. 226). Zemsky, Wegner, and Massy call this “the lattice”—“more paper, more reporting, and, not surprisingly, more personnel” (p. 21). Growth of the lattice exploded with “a host of new auxiliary enterprises” (p. 22) and “each new educational program had to be staffed, organized, marketed, and evaluated.” The “workforce was shifting the balance of the campus workforce, to the extent that faculty were becoming an important minority” (p. 24). The most glaring example of this is apparent at the University of Phoenix where marketing is everything and online faculty are almost nothing, being paid a paltry \$950 (a \$100 more, if the facilitator has a Ph.D.) to teach a three academic hour course for which each student pays \$1,500. The shift continued because the new campus businesses “were bringing in more money than they spent,” which drove up the total cost of higher education (p. 25). It is clear that the increase in the cost of higher education hasn’t been driven by higher faculty numbers or higher salaries but by the very things the authors recommend: more assessment and marketing.

What the authors call “the academic ratchet” paradoxically reduced the importance of the faculty in higher education by redefining their role “toward the more specialized concerns of research, publication, professional service, and personal pursuits” (p. 25). Their places were not only taken by academic support services, but by teaching assistants and adjuncts. At many universities, teaching is divided into thirds, with a third being done by teaching assistants, a third by adjuncts, and a third by tenure-track faculty. This division of labor diminishes the traditional faculty’s “engagement with the university as a whole” (p. 27). They become specialists, researchers, and something like consultants at their own schools, or they are co-opted into serving administrative roles to regulate adjuncts and teaching assistants. The result is that faculty are “becoming a smaller minority in the institutions they once

dominated” (p. 28). Their concerns are often more for professional engagements located off-campus than for on-campus governance.

3. The Admissions Arms Race

In part, this chapter focuses on the *U.S. News* rankings of colleges, which the authors call an “educational equivalent of a *Consumer Report*” (p. 38). The authors describe the CRS (Collegiate Results Survey), partly developed by Zemsky, and the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement), which they say, “promised to do precisely what *U.S. News*” doesn’t do, “focus on the educational process itself” (p. 39). The problem is that the best schools declined to participate because they “had nothing to gain and potentially a great deal to lose if their outcomes or levels of engagement were no better than those of institutions charging substantially lower prices” (p. 39). This leads to the question, what does *U.S. News* measure to make its rankings? Our authors claim that the only significant factor is “the six-year graduation rate” (p. 41). Top schools graduate 75 percent or more of their freshman class by the end of 6 years. This constitutes a kind of “output measure—an index of how well that institution serves its customers as well as the public.” This also becomes a kind of driver because it allows the top-ranked schools to “choose those students most likely to succeed and most willing to pay an extraordinarily high price for an undergraduate degree” (p. 42).

Our three authors are blunt in rejecting conventional wisdom. They say, “the market accords no advantage to institutions that go to extraordinary lengths to provide quality educations.” What matters “is not quality [...] but rather competitive advantage.” I am reluctant to entirely accept their reasoning when they say, “the only way in which educational quality will come to matter is when there is a demonstrable, market-based demand for it.” In the market view, among those who see only the economic effects of higher education, the demand is for the elite brand more than for skills and accomplishment that are difficult to measure or even to communicate to those who have no professional experience. There is another side to this coin. The Harvard graduate must still pass the bar or the medical licensing exam or win the NSF grant. Professional standards are more than sales pitches in which “Higher education’s consumers will have to be taught first to recognize, then to understand, and ultimately to value quality” (p. 44). Again, we return to the fundamental question about whether higher education is a consumer commodity or a social process, a private possession or a social value.

4. On Being Mission-Centered and Market-Smart

“Those who are discomforted—and in some cases offended—by linking academic and commercial pursuits are principally faculty, particularly those whose scholarly pursuits are centered in the humanities” (p. 51). Among them are the authors of the sermons about the virtue of small liberal arts colleges, which can be extended to characterize all higher education. Throughout the Cold War, the market for the university was the Pentagon. Through the 1970s “research and teaching were still described as joint products,” but “the reality was the former was underwriting the cost of the latter.” Outside research programs (and in many of the educational administration courses I took), the model was one of “entrenched bureaucracies [...] which] saw their principal task as the enforcement of

regulations designed to keep students in check, faculty in their offices, and entrepreneurs out of sight” (p. 53).

The NIH (National Institute of Health) budget is a lot of money: \$28.6 billion in 2005. And, there are other clients for university research. The 2005 NSF budget was \$5.5 billion. DoD (Department of Defense) spent \$3 billion for research in 2005. The editors of *Declining by Degrees* estimate that American higher education is “about a \$250 billion enterprise” (p. 1). The end of the Cold War shifted research from weapons to medicine. Another frontier for growth—the one recognized in this book—was found in the sheer numbers of customer-students. In 2003, “more than one-fourth of the U.S. population age 3 and older” were in school—a total of 75 million people including “nearly 17 million college students” (Census News). “Accreditation sets a floor on what is required for a college education, but, beyond that, consumer demand trumps academic values” (p. 60).

My sense is that the authors lean too far in the direction of explaining how the market is changing higher education and do not give enough credit to professional standards and accrediting agencies. I can anticipate their response in saying that my concern may be more for graduate than undergraduate education, but I don’t think that dispels the concern about accepting marketplace techniques to redefine the university. I agree with their advice—“To make the mission-centered-market-smart strategy succeed, the institution must commit itself to transparency”—but I have seen very little of that in 35 years of teaching. The authors explain that “Transparency means, at a minimum, an agreed-upon set of rules and the necessary data to calculate contribution margins—even if, in the process of making those calculations, it becomes obvious that some departments, for example, have lower teaching loads or higher average salaries” (p. 65).

Perhaps, the more fundamental question is how much such administrative technique can control higher education. An “agreed-upon set of rules” produces predictable results. If the university is just another consumer service defined by the invisible hand of the marketplace, then even the market-savvy techniques of the authors will have limited results. The institution may economically flourish, but it will be what the marketplace wants, a service provider rather than a traditional university. The model is offered by the University of Phoenix, which lavishly repays investors while paying faculty next to nothing. It offers job training but considers research, libraries, art galleries, and laboratories inessential. In John Sperling’s words, The University of Phoenix “is a corporation, not a social entity. Coming here is not a rite of passage. We are not trying to develop their [students’] value systems or go in for that ‘expand their minds’ bullshit” (Cox, 2002).

5. To Publish and Perish

The model or policy described in this chapter is familiar by now. Publishing research is ostensibly the goal of graduate programs at research universities, but “what matters most, finally, is the role of graduate assistants” in providing “cheap and expert labor” (p. 70). The authors take this a step further to use it as an illustration of how “higher education often misrepresents to itself and others what it actually produces and which markets it ultimately serves.” The shift here continues to illustrate the authors’ Modernist and reductive outlook. Instead of accepting the values and dedication expressed within a research science

community, they purport to tell us what is *really* going on in the capitalist context. Graduate education in the sciences is “not about jobs or degrees” or careers for graduates, “but rather about the efficient production and publication of scientific findings.” Again, I think the authors press the commodity versus culture argument too hard. Research science journals as a commodity are only valuable or even meaningful to those involved in the culture of a specific research science. The context and culture define the value of the commodity. The authors claim that “the training of scientific personnel involves less than two hundred major research universities that principally supply graduate education in the sciences, medicine, and technology.” We should pause over this seemingly innocuous claim because it implies much of the argument or assumption in the book. Here the authors imply that science does not matter very much to American higher education. I think this is more a partisan than factual claim. For example, there are 125 American medical schools employing 119,000 faculty (RxPG News). The reason the authors wish to push science and engineering aside is because they are the cultures and disciplines least likely to accept the model of giving customers what they want and most likely to insist that their professional standards cannot be compromised.

The authors continue to elaborate a business view of science, saying “The market for scholarly publications [...] involves the entire industry—or at least every institution with a library and faculty members who expect access to the research literature in their fields” (p. 71). They then argue the other pole a couple of pages later, saying that in research fields “the producers of knowledge are also its principal consumers” because the ideas and techniques are too arcane for anyone else to understand (p. 73). The problem with their analysis is produced by their methods. Instead of trying to offer a “thick description” of the values inherent in scientific research that drive it by motivating scientists (who are not consumers, nor businessmen), they try to assess its value from the outside in the vocabulary and methods of the market. In this way, the argument in the book is over before begins because of the insistence that the market view (capitalism) is the only context that matters in assessing value. The only value is a cash value. Social roles are limited to those of consumers and producers.

We see the same commitment to their theme at work in their argument for academic authors to better value and control their scholarly output instead of giving it away to academic journals (p. 74). Of course, they understand how the culture of research science works, from getting government grants to freely disseminating research findings. Nonetheless, their experience and commitment to how market and customer demand drive development in a capitalist economy cause them to focus exclusively on this model, saying, for example, that on the one hand scientists “quite literally” give “away the property rights associated with research” and then ask their libraries to buy it back again from commercial publishers (p. 75). The point is that although science can be analyzed as a business, it is not a business. Its purpose is not to sell commodities and services through advertising.

Our authors suggest that “departments must decouple publication and faculty evaluation for the purposes of promotion and tenure” (p. 82). They advise “universities and colleges to assume a more direct role in certifying the value of research results—a function [...] now almost exclusively performed by scholarly journals” (p. 83). Again, they are misled by their culture of business to see commodities or goals rather than to recognize a complex cultural process. They should try to read articles in molecular medicine or astrophysics journals

before giving such advice. Universities and colleges have no magic wand to do this. They employ various experts whose intellectual dedications must necessarily be to professions, like astronomy or molecular medicine. If their greater dedication is to an institution, doesn't this mean their profession is not to science? Following the authors' advice would likely produce more loyal, and perhaps even more skilled functionaries and administrators, but it would deny tenure to the most gifted and talented whose work is unintelligible to non-experts and argumentative in exposing the anomalies or shortcomings of the status quo or normal science view. This kind of work, rather than consumer taste or bureaucratic judgment, provides the engine for scientific progress.

The authors end this chapter asking, "why is there so little focused action to solve a problem so well understood" as the cost of science? (p. 85). They are reluctant to accept the answers that reducing everything to a capitalist balance sheet doesn't sufficiently explain the world and that other communities have autonomous concerns, methods, and views.

6. A Value Proposition

This chapter identifies "The Three Cs" about what is wrong with higher education. Institutions are too competitive, allowing others, like *U.S. News* to set terms for competition or assessment (p. 86). Secondly, higher education is becoming more about status, branding, and jobs after graduation. It is considered a consumer commodity more than personal growth involving a change of thinking and identity. The university is "less about ideas and more about things (degrees, credentials, connections) leading to other things (jobs, positions, careers)." Thirdly, "At America's major universities commercially sponsored research has become big business." Science is a big business in the sense that it requires a lot of money. If the change is one from defining "good science" as that with military potential, to "that which has commercial [or medical] potential," is that such a profound change of value (p. 87)? This question leads to a more fundamental objection. The authors have great insight and experience, but I wonder how many of the issues they identify are under the control of discursive methods, much less reductive economics? They say, "At this juncture higher education needs discussions centered on the core values that unite the college or university as a learning community." In the next sentence, they admit "Any conversation about core values is as difficult to describe as it is to convene" (p. 97). This suggests that the university—like any complex institution—is a negotiated and changing social construction made by many agents, including many off-campus who are unlikely to be involved in such a conversation. In *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education*, David Kirp offers something of a model of this discussion that took place at the University of Chicago during the decade of the 1990s. Instead of applauding the outcome as an example of faculty or institution-wide consensus of what higher education should be dedicated to, Kirp writes that the president, Hugo Sonnenschein, may someday be recognized as "the leader who saved an institution by dragging it into modern times" to recognize market forces as well as an ecology of professions and communities (p. 51).

7. Thwarted Innovation

This chapter considers the promise of online learning, which the authors say five years ago suggested "a trillion dollar market wrapped around the prospects of anytime-anywhere

learning” that implied minimal production costs. They say, “All that is now gone, replaced by a pervading sense of disappointment” (p. 101). I recently heard Professor Zemsky repeat this judgment in a lecture at Northern Arizona University. The authors allude to how Ivy League schools (Columbia, NYU, and others) squandered \$100 million dollars. But they do not explain what this money was spent on. It was spent on marketing in the mistaken assumption that students would buy the elite Ivy League brand and appreciate being entertained by world-class scholars. Later in the chapter, the authors, having examined university bookstore software sales, infer that students want to be involved; they “want to be connected, principally to one another; they want to be entertained, principally by games, music, and movies”—although this is not suggested by the software sales figures. The programs were all production software (p. 119). Finally, “they want to present themselves and their work” (p. 120).

A hundred million dollars *is* a vast sum, but it pays for less than a day of the Iraq War. In 2004, the University of Phoenix spent almost four times that amount, “\$383 million on marketing [...] a staggering amount, considering that few universities spend even \$10 million” (Symonds). The entire gross earnings of UOP in 1998 was \$384 million (Cox, in Johnson, p. 17). The University of Phoenix also demonstrated that the cost of faculty is the easiest thing to reduce. E-learning promised “customized, self-paced, and problem-based learning. Designers and facilitators would replace course instructors; ‘the sage on the stage’ would literally become ‘the guide on the side’” (p. 102). This is not “remaking” the American university; it is destroying it.

Despite emphasizing the marketing and business failures of e-learning entrepreneurs, the authors end the chapter saying, “We believe the story of e-learning is still unfolding; no one really knows what tomorrow will bring” (p. 122). Once again, the story is about marketing rather than education as it is understood by the practices of faculty and students. As with the University of Phoenix, the market may “remake” what it means to be a professor or faculty at a *university*, but that meaning convinces only those for whom the market context is reality. The legitimate authority for defining who a professor is remains vested in *real* universities, and the professional literature written by real professors, because the function of being a professor lies in the context of what he or she does in a *real* university with traditional departments in the areas of the arts and sciences. I suppose John Sperling would dismiss this as “expand their minds’ bullshit.” The University of Phoenix seems to wish to avoid the argument by instructing its facilitators not to call themselves professors. The argument here parallels that between the marketplace and medicine. The marketplace can control or diminish medical services. But it does not have the legitimate authority to define medicine because the relevant measures lie in the communities of science and medicine, not commerce.

8. Who Owns Teaching?

I am struck first by the use of the verb in the chapter title. We can own nouns, but if teaching is a process, it can be performed and experienced, but not owned. The authors ask, “Who owns intercollegiate athletics?” The answer involves a complex set of negotiations to create what the authors call “circles of ownership” (p. 128). This is as close as they come to recognizing postmodern methods of social construction. Using this as something of a

model, the authors worry that “teaching potentially becomes a performance and hence just another commodity to be developed and sold as an article of commerce” (p. 130). Apparently, they are thinking that teaching is a performance comparable to, say, a basketball game in which spectators pay to watch. Teaching is not like this and consequently I am not convinced of the danger here. The failure of the Ivy League to create an elite brand of highbrow entertainment that is also a commodity for information download indicates that teaching is still a relationship and conversation between an instructor or mentor and students who want some part in the process of learning.

In a subheading, “Teaching as Object,” the authors warn faculty that their control of intellectual property may be at risk in online education. They suggest Napster as a model of how consumers might “steal” teaching as they have music. Apparently, they forgot about science researchers giving away their intellectual property in the process of doing science. In any case, this mistakes the process for a commodity like a textbook.

The authors end this chapter with a different worry. They recognize that “Teaching is ultimately a fabric of interwoven threads supplied in part by an individual faculty member, in part by students,” and in part by the structure of the school and CMS (Course Management Software) programs like WebCT. In these negotiations or balances, they worry about “the extent to which college teaching is an entrepreneurial activity carried out by individuals in search of personal gain” and how much it is “a community activity carried out by people with shared commitments who are in conversation with one another” (p. 137). The book, or the commitments of the authors, suggest that public, community, and professional values are no match for market forces.

My fear is that the answer lies more in technique or process than in policy choices. For example, PeopleSoft and WebCT significantly define how I can teach online courses. I can no longer control a student’s access to *my* courses. If students make a FERPA choice not to have any information about them released, they appear in my roster as blanks, which I cannot change. When the university chose WebCT’s Vista, no one had enough experience with the product to understand or foresee such entailments, which contribute to the impression that faculty merely facilitate the course and that the important concerns are administrative, legal, and technical. Wiring the university is a project done by business and university administrators that has by-passed faculty even though it now determines how many of us teach.

9. Making Educational Quality Job One

I am sure you recognize this slogan from Ford Motor Company, which is now reorganizing in the recognition that their products cannot offer everything to everyone. The authors make the same point in this chapter, saying, “the traditional university’s core competency lies in knowledge creation, not in educating large numbers of students at the highest quality possible given available resources. Most faculty care about educational quality less passionately than they care about knowledge creation” (p. 142). This is a way of saying that professional values count more than customer satisfaction. The authors say “that resistance from the faculty [...] essentially nullified most publicly mandated efforts” because the mandate is about lower prices and customer satisfaction, from the bottom up, while faculty

are driven by a concern for professional standards from the top down (p. 144). In blunt terms, they do not care what the customer thinks because ultimately the student is not a customer but someone who aspires to become a professional by demonstrating mastery of skills and competencies that are beyond the scope or concern of customer service talk. When students finally graduate, the talk or concern necessarily shifts from customer satisfaction to professional standards that they are required to meet in order to offer services as a nurse, pilot, or some other professional.

There are discrete and incommensurable community views that clash here. To insist that the market view has hegemony may well be the case, but we cannot save the values of the traditional university by advising that it adopt market-smart techniques like the University of Phoenix. The university can be remade, but the traditional university cannot be preserved by market-smart values. The authors ask, “Who is to say what constitutes better—those of us who have given our lives to the academy, or some ad hoc group of outsiders”? (p. 147). Yet, their message is: give customers whatever they will pay for because if we don’t, we are out of business.

The authors are rhetorically adept in offering non-polemic and highly useful advice on developing curricula and doing assessment (pp. 151-3). They believe, “it is important that the process itself involves matters of direct consequence to faculty, not lofty abstractions or requirements sent down by some remote oversight body” (p. 159). In my eyes, they then lose their credibility by nominating the University of Phoenix as a model: “That institution not only accepts but embeds accountability for top to bottom” (p. 155). Yes, with the result that so-called faculty at UOP have no control over anything. They are hired-help, not professionals. The accountability the authors recognize is to shareholders of Apollo stock. UOP qualifies as a *university* only on the basis of its lobbying efforts and ability to meet technical and legal requirements. Ana Marie Cox—who calls UOP the Enron of higher education (Cox, in Johnson, p. 23)—says that “Phoenix has done more than almost any other education enterprise to shift the meaning of college from that of a process one goes through to a product one buys” (Cox, in Johnson, p. 16). Nominating this as a model university once again catches the authors in an unguarded moment when their enthusiasm for the market paradigm is no longer a tactic or strategy but a cancer.

10. Not Good Enough

This judgment views education as a consumable product. The authority is exclusively grounded in the taste of the customer. The provider or institution is judged to be “not good enough” on the basis of price, accessibility, and results measured by employment prospects. The argument here seems to be for lowering standards. Under the sub-heading, “Calibrating the System,” the authors argue that “it becomes important that college faculty know first-hand the atmosphere of a middle school or a high school that enrolls at-risk students.” They repeat the point: “Other collegiate faculty need to gain a fuller understanding of the growing pool of youth from poorer settings who acquire too little of the educational preparation or the self-confidence needed to succeed in college or work” (p. 174). Many of my colleagues will ask why this is important, knowing that the answer lies in marketing and customer satisfaction rather than in professional standards. The authors end the chapter with an even more unlikely agenda: “There must be a recognition that solving the problem involves the

entire education system—as a system—rather than any particular part or parts of the system” (p. 177). This implies some kind of Stalinist reorganization from kindergarten through post-docs. Once again the Modernist assumption that all of this is under the rational control of administrative technique is implausible to everyone but the salesmen.

11. Crafting a Public Agenda

This chapter may be better read from back to front. The authors say that the public has lost faith in the values of higher education and care only for an economic bottom line. Thus, we “can no longer expect the public or its political leadership to be particularly moved by the fact that higher education’s mission is to educate and conduct research” (p. 195). The case to argue for public support “cannot be based on vague claims of virtue or intellectual superiority” (p. 197). They suggest that the university has already capitulated. For most schools, “What matters today is how well the student is served” (p. 191).

Today, “crafting a public agenda” seems to mean abandoning the notion of higher education as a public value. Ironically, the authors say that universities are “less willing to trust their futures to the process of public deliberation” and yet they accept the caprice of consumer taste as an inviolable standard without any of the hedging or qualification that John Stuart Mill made against Jeremy Bentham’s simple calculations in developing the Utilitarian view of capitalism (p. 180).

The authors acknowledge that “the values of inquiry and discovery that motivate traditional institutions and their faculty—the pursuit and conveyance of knowledge beyond what the market itself demands—could easily become lost in all but the best-endowed institutions” (p. 185). Ironically, this is caused in large part by “the fact that the market for higher education is projected to more than double in size during the next twenty years.” The previous causes for higher education growth were social, illustrated, for example, by the G.I. Bill and the Cold War. These public concerns caused institutions to be “almost entirely mission-centered.” The forces now “will be more explicitly market centered” in the model of customer satisfaction (p. 184).

12. Dancing with Change

The somewhat whimsical chapter title fails to hide the culminating question for the last chapter: is the traditional university doomed to follow the customer service model offered by the University of Phoenix? The authors’ advice points in that direction. They advise us to “Make institutions less labor-intensive; simplify the curriculum; [and] transform departments into instructional collectives” (p. 200). The effect is to demote faculty to adjunct facilitators of commercially produced content. The value and authority shift from faculty and professions to administrative and fiscal concerns. The university becomes a business. The model is offered by UOP.

Ironically, the threat to higher education is found in its success. Because Americans believe in the formula that a college education is the means to the end of securing a good job, “upward of 70 percent of each graduating high school” class is college bound. This means that “No state has sufficient funds to operate a public system of higher education today that

offers the same level of public subsidy per student that was provide in the 1950s and 1960s” (p. 201). If the customer is footing the bill, he should have more say in what he is buying.

The final advice repeats the message of the book; “getting more focused” about market demands. The model now seems to be Wal-Mart, which has inverted the traditional economic model in which manufacturers produce goods for a wholesale market to select from. Instead, Wal-Mart now tells Chinese manufacturers what it wants and what it will pay. Students have not yet begun to this boldly tell professors what to teach. The authors say that “In most colleges and universities departments have primary responsibility for setting standards” and deciding on what the school offers to its customers. But they do not have this authority in the way the authors suggest. The authority to define, for example, a legitimate curricula in physics or biology rests with the profession, which is more to be found in the professional journals of the discipline and in accrediting agencies than in the administrative or curricular decisions of department faculty. Faculty get tenure because they have demonstrated an ability to creatively add to that research activity. They cannot, then, be asked by business to forget all this and be motivated as business people to provide what customers want. The university is not such a business. If it is forced to become such a business, then it will, indeed, be “remade” into a consumer service.

The authors advise faculty to think less about professional standards and more about the market or what students want (p. 204). Customer satisfaction, which is to say assessment, is the key: “Higher education—forced to get over its squeamishness with measurement—will have to say, ‘If we know what we ought to be doing, then we can measure whether in fact we are doing it or not’” (p. 210). The yardstick to make these measurements is provided by business for business needs. The authors are rhetorically very good. But in the end, they offer the kind of university we would expect to find in Sinclair Lewis’ *Main Street* and *Babbitt*; a university that looks towards Wal-Mart as the paradigm institution it serves.

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