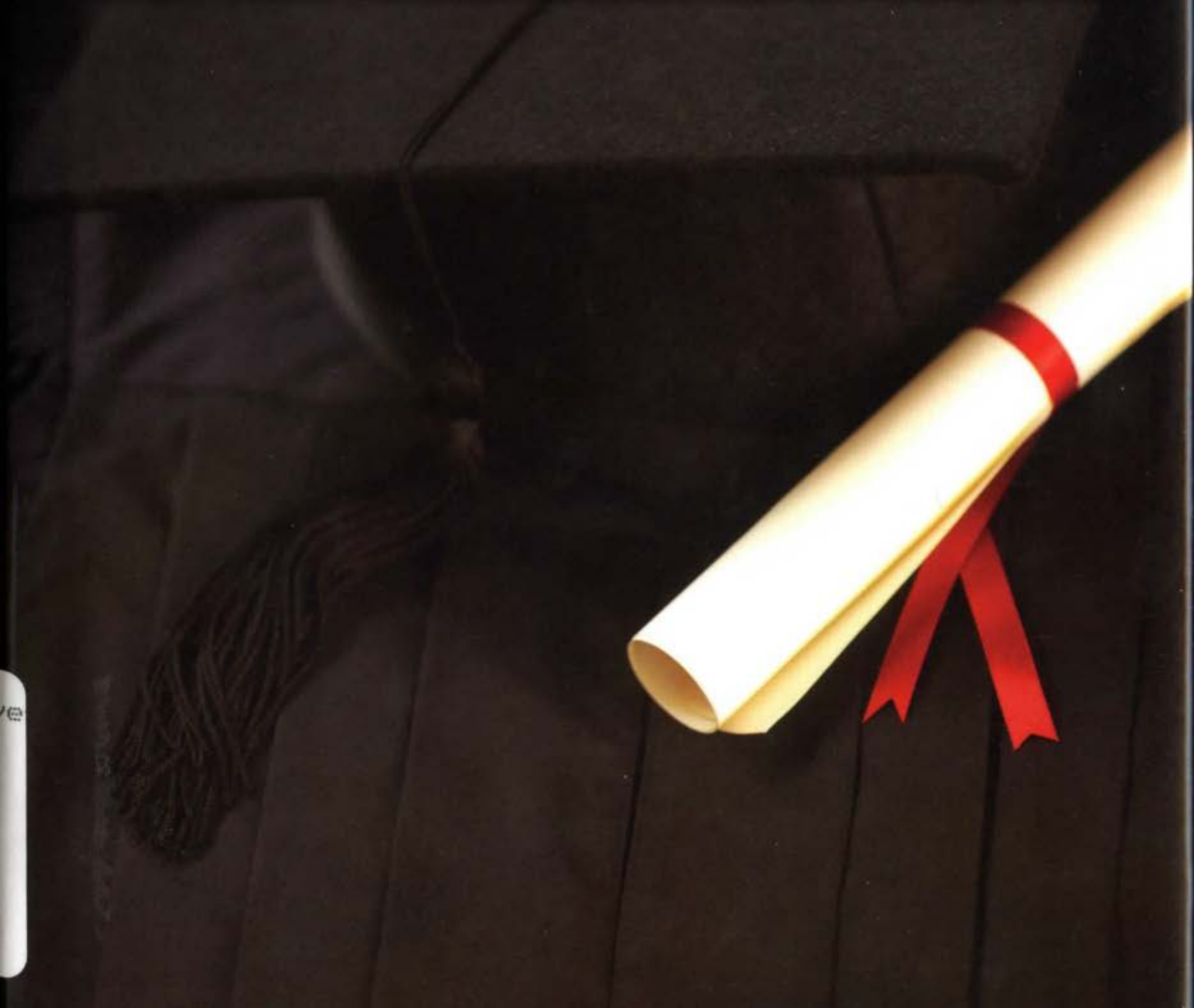
Edward L. Morris

The Lindenwood Model

An Antidote for What Ails Undergraduate Education



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To Mom and Dad

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PREFACE

The way colleges and universities are run has always seemed peculiar to me. Prior to leaving the business world and beginning a second career as a college teacher a few years ago, I had only been on the periphery of higher education—as a student, the parent of students, an adjunct professor, and a trustee of a college—and the questions I harbored about academia never rose above curiosities. I never lost sleep thinking about them. Those questions rose in prominence, however, as I began spending my working days on campus, and especially on the campus of Lindenwood University.

In a nutshell, *The Lindenwood Model* focuses on some of the ailments of higher education and, using the recent successes of Lindenwood University, a private, mid-sized liberal arts university near St. Louis, Missouri, offers up a few possible cures. It is also, I suppose, an elongated version of the answers to my long-held questions about academia. Those questions are:

Why does college cost so much?

While I was an undergraduate, and much more so as a graduate student paying my own bills, I took to dividing the total semester tuition and fees by the classroom hours I had purchased to determine how much each class hour was costing me. I don't remember the exact numbers, but the cost came out roughly to a ticket for a first-run Broadway show. I wasn't naïve enough, even then, to think that attendance at a string of hit plays would provide an education, but the calculation was nonetheless edifying. Years later my children went to the same kinds of schools I had attended and, while trying not to be too tedious about it, I made the same calculation. I found that they too could attend those Broadway shows—*and* have a nice dinner afterwards.

However one calibrates the cost, college is an expensive proposition and is only becoming more so. The price tag for a college education, like the cost of receiving quality healthcare, seems to increase each year at a rate far in excess of inflation and to account for an ever larger portion of a family budget. The reasons given for the rise in healthcare costs make sense—an aging population, new and expensive medical technologies, a large pool of uninsured patients—but the defenders of rising education costs have never presented arguments that made sense to me. Those arguments tend to boil down to "that's just the way it is."

As I paid tuition bills over the years, I shrugged and hoped the benefits of college matched the cost. But now I'm convinced that a quality education can be much more affordable. During my six years at Lindenwood there have only two years in which the school's undergraduate tuition was increased, in one year by 1.5% and in the latest year by 3.5%. A longer look at the university's costs shows a rate of increase that is consistently *lower* than inflation. As a result, this private school—which has no debt, receives no government funding, and has only a modest endowment—offers students what I believe is a high-quality, liberal arts based education at a cost that is not only significantly lower than its peers, but also roughly the same as attending a state-supported school.

Is the quality of higher education commensurate with its cost?

My degrees are from three private research universities and, though my experience is obviously limited and possibly unique, I reached the following conclusion: the more prestigious and costly the institution, the lower the quality of the teaching. I received an MBA from an Ivy League school well known for its business education programs. Yet I can remember few stimulating classroom experiences and few close encounters with the school's renowned professors. More often than not, my classes were conducted by young assistant professors, graduate students, and a supply of adjunct professors from the local business community. Although the faculty roster contained some of the leading lights of business education, I have no recollection of being in the classroom of a great teacher. I graduated with honors, but I am not at all certain that what I learned was significantly different from or better than the MBA offerings at other less touted programs.

My undergraduate degree is from a university that now has a national reputation, though when I was in attendance it would be more accurate to say it had only national aspirations. Yet I had the pleasure of a being in the classroom with several stimulating and caring teachers whom I remember fondly for opening vistas and spending out-of-class time with undergraduates. At the time the university required each department head to teach the introductory course in his or her field, a policy put in effect with lectures in auditoriums and smaller sections taught by teaching assistants. But the policy at least assured some interaction between esteemed scholars and undergraduate students. I hope, but am somewhat doubtful, that the policy is still in place.

My doctorate came from a Jesuit university, a well-respected school, but not one found in the upper ranks of surveys of higher education. It was there where I found the highest proportion of committed and extraordinary teachers, individuals who took their academic specialties seriously, but their students even more seriously.

Is all this research necessary?

When professors at research universities are not in the classroom, they are presumably at work expanding the frontiers of their academic specialty and publishing the results in scholarly periodicals. That may be so, but in the thirty some years I spent in the financial industry, I never once heard anyone refer to, much less use, an article that appeared in the *Journal of Finance,* the most prestigious academic publication in my field. Nor for that matter did I ever hear anyone refer to any of the many lesser academic journals covering finance. I dealt with scores of well-known professionals on Wall Street and with chief financial officers of major corporations, but they were seemingly untouched by the heavy volume of new research pouring forth from the universities.

Is the neglect I observed due to laziness, or perhaps to anti-intellectualism? Probably not, because any useful information, especially pertinent information about the financial markets, can be put to profitable use. The more likely reason for the lack of interest in finance research may be its triviality. There are many powerful ideas that have emerged from academic research in finance—and a few Nobel Prizes in Economics—but most of what appears in academic journals is nearly incomprehensible to anyone without advanced mathematical training and, at least in my opinion, has very limited practical value.

I have no authority to pronounce research in other fields to be as disappointing and generally trivial, but in the humanities and "soft sciences" I expect that much of what is written has little interest beyond a small circle of readers within the academy. To my mind there is a strong argument that some amount of reallocation of intellectual resources away from research and into the education of students could be fruitful.

Why are universities exempt from sensible management practices?

Most business people introduced to the ways of academia must consider themselves to be strangers in a strange land. When I drove home after board meetings during my brief stint as a trustee of a liberal arts college, I often reflected that my job in private business wasn't nearly as challenging as college administration. Business corporations are organized and managed to serve one primary constituent: their customers. In order to hold on to those customers in an increasingly competitive global economy, U.S. businesses have been forced to employ no-nonsense, customer focused management practices. They operate today much leaner and, perhaps, much meaner than ever before. And despite the recent spate of corporate governance scandals, customers of virtually all industries are reaping the rewards of lower prices and higher quality.

By contrast, institutions of higher education continue to operate in a comparative dream world, attempting to fulfill disparate and conflicting missions, making decisions through a ponderous and fractious management apparatus, providing their faculty with life-long employment and other employee perquisites unheard of in the rest of the working world, and, most damagingly, paying far too little attention to the student, its primary customer.

Education and business, of course, are quite different in their missions; the aim of creating and bestowing knowledge is much different from satisfying customers. For sure, a university's customers are not, by their very nature, "always right." Yet I believe a major reason that higher education is falling in repute is that too many colleges and universities operate in a manner that is far from ideal by the standards of business, and at odds with the needs of their students.

Some Qualifications

As the reader no doubt suspects, Lindenwood operates much differently than most colleges and universities, and for that reason the school's practices are viewed by many academics as odd, off the mark, wrongheaded, or, at the very least, controversial. Yet when looking through the prism of a businessman turned professor, I find very little that is controversial in the academic model adopted by the university. Its student-centered mission statement—"To educate responsible, global citizens"—is remarkable for its clarity and simplicity, and its self-description as a "teaching university" is a welcome contrast to the pretensions of the research university model that holds a grip on much of higher education.

Yet that being said, a number of qualifications are in order. First, there is no presumption that the way Lindenwood operates should serve as a model applicable to all of higher education. The subtitle of the book makes the claim that it is "an antidote to what ails undergraduate education," not *the* antidote. In particular, the handful of truly great American research universities are a separate species and are generally admired throughout the world. They may not always be student friendly, but they serve a vital function for society.

In the same vein, *The Lindenwood Model* deals exclusively with traditional undergraduate education. Lindenwood has a fair sized graduate school and awards a variety of master's degrees and a doctorate degree in education. It also conducts a successful individualized program for non-traditional students. But the core and foundation of the school is providing a liberal arts education to the traditional undergraduate student, rather than the more specialized training that typifies graduate and professional education.

Finally, I do not intend to imply that *The Lindenwood Model* describes the one and only right way to run a university. Since the new operating model was put in place in the late 1980s, the school has grown from a moribund, nearly bankrupt college with fewer than a thousand students to a thriving, debt free school with an undergraduate population of over 4,000 students. I credit the efficacy of the model with that growth, but Lindenwood's growth spurt makes it look and act at times like an institutional teenager, and, like any employee at any organization, there are management practices at the school that I find perplexing. Lindenwood is *not* a model of operational efficiency, but it is a school that each year makes it possible for many young people to get a solid education at a reasonable price. In my opinion, that's worth a book.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT AILS UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

"What we have learned over the last year makes clear that American higher education has become what, in the business world, would be called a mature enterprise: increasingly risk-averse, at times self-satisfied, and unduly expensive."

—Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006[1]

Undergraduate students at most U.S. colleges and universities are being shortchanged. By any measure, the cost of a traditional four-year program has become wildly expensive. At the same time, informed observers with a stake in the outcome—parents, employers, and educators themselves—are increasingly skeptical of the quality of the degrees students are receiving. A disconnect between the cost and benefits appears to be growing unabated on the nation's campuses.

Because no industry or institution can operate over the long term without providing value commensurate with price, higher education, with its ever-accelerating costs and falling standards, appears headed for a crisis. And, of course, education is not just another "industry." A deterioration in its vitality and effectiveness carries broad implications for the economy and society generally.

A Genuine Crisis?

There are some 2,200 four-year colleges and universities in the U.S., and they are difficult not to like. The campuses tend to be leafy and lovely, and the faculty engaging and provocative. Alumni usually remember their college years with great affection and know first hand that a college diploma is a passport to many of life's best opportunities. In a comprehensive 2003 poll, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* found that the American public generally shares the positive perception of higher education. Of the 1,000 individuals questioned, private colleges and universities enjoyed a "great deal of confidence" (expressed by 51% of those polled), a level exceeded only by the military (65%). The high confidence rating of four-year public colleges and universities was only slightly lower (46%). By contrast, other groups fared significantly less well, including public elementary and secondary schools (32%), the U.S. Congress (14%) and large corporations (9%).[2]

But there are serious, if not widely recognized, problems in higher education, including the unrelenting and often crippling increase in its cost. For the last several decades, increases in tuition and other costs of attending college have so far outpaced the underlying inflation rate that, in real terms, today's students are paying about double the amount their parents paid to get a bachelor's degree. For the 2005-2006 academic year, the average amount of tuition and fees for a year's attendance at a private four-year college was over $21,000.* In 1976-1977, thirty years earlier and when the parents of today's students may have been in college, the same tuition and fees—*in 2005 dollars*—were approximately $8,000. The increases were of the same magnitude for public colleges, where the costs, in inflation adjusted dollars, increased from about $2,000 in 1976-1977 to $5,500 in 2005-2006.[3] And since there is scant evidence that the trends are changing, the children of today's students are likely to experience yet another doubling or tripling of inflation adjusted costs.

* When room and board charges are considered, the average cost of attending a private college exceeds $29,000. (College Board, Trends in College Pricing, 2005, p. 7.)

Looking at a similar period, Richard Vedder, an economist at Ohio University who writes widely on higher education, found that between 1982 and 2003, the increase in all consumer prices was 83%, but college tuition increased by *295%*. (The increase in tuition exceeded that of healthcare, the other rapidly increasing cost for most families. Health costs were up "only" 195% during the same period.) With an ever-increasing share of U.S. household income dedicated to higher education, the federal government estimates that only 20% of families are able to pay college costs out of earned income.[4] For some middle-income students, the stated cost of attending an elite college *exceeds* their family income.

Faced with those costs, a growing percentage of potential students simply opt out of college, to the point that today half of all high school graduates *qualified* for a four-year college are simply not attending.[5] And a growing portion of the other half that elects to attend winds up borrowing heavily to plug the gap between cost and means. The debt that students and their parents incur will often extend far into the students' working lives and affect everything from family planning to professional options. The American Council on Education notes that in 1993, slightly less than half of college graduates were paying off student loans, but that by 2000, nearly two-thirds of such graduates were in that category. The ACE maintains that for the most part students can handle their indebtedness, but notes that close to 40% of students are graduating with "unmanageable levels of student loan debt."[6] Anecdotal evidence suggests that new graduates are able to service those high debt levels only by taking on two jobs after graduating, the job their education prepared them for plus a moonlighting job to cover their monthly debt payments.[7] It's not surprising then that a recent poll by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* found that 88% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement that "Many college students have incurred too much debt for their education."[8]

As college becomes less affordable, society as a whole suffers. If capable students are dissuaded from attending college because of immediate or long-term financial burdens, positions for qualified college graduates go begging. In a highly competitive, global economy, the implications are cause for concern. According to a recent survey by Public Agenda, young adults overwhelmingly view a college degree as highly desirable and a key to financial security. Yet of those who had never enrolled in college or who had dropped out, a large percentage said they couldn't afford college or needed to work. Citing the survey, College Board head Gaston Caperton said, "We need to address disconcerting evidence that the cost of higher education is a deterrent, and in some cases a deal-breaker, for many students."[9]

There are related concerns with respect to social mobility. At one time college education was an option only for children of privilege. But with the GI Bill after World War II, and affirmative action and other outreach initiatives more recently, the campus appeared to be a more democratized place. Most signs now, however, point to a reversion to exclusivity in college attendance. According to Census Bureau statistics, less than 9% of students from the poorest income quartile now obtain a college degree, compared to about 75% from the highest income quartile.[10] There are other factors behind the widening income and social gaps, but rapidly increasing college costs are a real threat to America's cherished ideal of meritocracy.

A Disengaged Faculty

As burdensome as the cost of college has become, its financial toll would be easier to withstand for students and their parents if there were an obvious and commensurate increase in value. Unfortunately, cost and quality have not generally risen together. In fact, there has been an alarming decline in both basic knowledge and in the language and analytical capabilities of new graduates. A college degree is key to getting a first job, but a poll by The Futures Project, a Brown University-based study group, found that 90% of recent college graduates felt their education did not provide the skills necessary for workplace success.[11] This assessment is often echoed by employers who often find it necessary to screen degreed applicants with independent testing for basic intellectual abiliemeritus Murray Sperber of Indiana University: "A non-aggression pact exists between many faculty members and students. Because the former believe that they must spend most of their time doing research, and the latter often prefer to pass their time having fun, a mutual non-aggression pact occurs with each side agreeing not to impinge on the other. The glue that keeps the pact intact is grade inflation: easy As for merely acceptable work and Bs for mediocre work."[14]

Unfortunately, the pact is played out daily at most large universities, with undergraduate students sitting anonymously in an auditorium with hundreds of other students, then attending smaller classes and laboratory sessions presided over by graduate students or, at best, by young professors. One-on-one contact with a senior professor occurs infrequently. Quality advising, academic or otherwise, occurs rarely, if at all.

The Case for the Teaching University: A Preview

It is not unreasonable for students and their parents, paying upwards of $40,000 per year in tuition and fees, to ask why they are not getting their money's worth. Likewise, in view of the uneven quality of college graduates, it's not unreasonable for a concerned public at large to ask what's gone wrong with U.S. colleges and universities. In its succeeding chapters, *The Lindenwood Model* addresses these important questions by bringing to light some of the many policies and operating practices of higher educational institutions that are harmful to American undergraduate education. At the same time, the book contrasts such policies and practices to those in place at Lindenwood University, a private school that, by operating out of the mainstream of American higher education, has returned the cost-benefit ratio of going to college to a much more reasonable level.

Chapters 2 and 3 look at institutional mission, with a contention that too many universities lack focus, attempting to be all things to all people. They become "multiversities," with their far-flung goals and directions—teaching, research, entertainment, sports programs, and social initiatives— many of which divert them from the central mission of education and, at the same time, make the cost of attendance higher for the student. Lindenwood, by contrast, resists the temptation of "mission creep," and calls itself simply a teaching institution, with the straightforward, albeit lofty, goal of its one sentence mission statement: To educate responsible citizens of the global community.*

The implicit message of the teaching university is that the education and welfare of the student come first. While all colleges and universities maintain that the student's welfare is of the uppermost importance, the reality is often at odds with the practice. Unreasonably influenced by the annual rankings of colleges compiled by *U.S. News & World Report*—rankings that give great weight to the accomplishments and talents of incoming freshman students—at many schools interest in the student stops at the admissions office. Chapter 4, "Students as Trophies," discusses the perversity of the pursuit of institutional prestige through limiting enrollment to otherwise capable students through stringent "quality control." The chapter then contrasts a prestige-centered goal with that of Lindenwood, where the admissions policy is only moderately selective, but where the focus is on "value added," i.e. what the student looks like at commencement compared to what he or she looked like at matriculation.

The following three chapters describe the practices that flow from a goal of putting the student first. Chapter 5 deals with Lindenwood's maintenance of a meaningful college curriculum in the face of a deterioration in that curriculum when professors are allowed to teach what they like to teach, rather than what students need to know. Chapter 6 looks at Lindenwood's initiatives outside the classroom. While other schools have largely abandoned interest in— much less responsibility for—the non-academic aspects of student life, Lindenwood's faculty may be without peer in student advising in extra-curricular activities. And

* Its move to the teaching university model came relatively late in Lindenwood's long history. From its founding in 1827 until the late 1960s, the school successfully occupied a small but important niche as a women's college focusing on the liberal arts. During the subsequent decades, however, Lindenwood followed the path of many similar colleges throughout the country by converting to a co-educational institution. It also entered into a period of educational experimentation—essentially attempting to be all things to all people—and that, combined with a rather free-wheeling management style led to its near demise. By 1989, Lindenwood's demoralized faculty of 40 professors was roughly the size of that year's graduating class. It was in that year that a reconstituted board of trustees and new president took control and put the teaching university model in place.

if "values neutral" is the apt description for most campuses, "value centered" is closer to Lindenwood's approach to student development. Chapter 7 describes how Lindenwood's extensive intercollegiate athletic program supports the university's student centered mission statement, and in particular how the school avoids the distortions of academic values and resource deployment that inevitably crop up on campuses fielding big-time, quasi-professional sports teams.

In Chapters 8, 9 and 10, the focus is shifted from the student to the faculty. In what is no doubt its most controversial departure from the traditions of academe, Lindenwood does not offer academic tenure to its faculty. As discussed in Chapter 8, tenure is justified by the noble goal of promoting academic freedom. But a tenured faculty imposes work rules and employment costs unlike those in any other sector of the economy. In particular, the growth of faculty deadwood is virtually impossible to control and can sap the creativity and energy of the remaining members. And beyond its high costs, borne ultimately by the student, it arguably carries the unintended consequence of stifling healthy debate and promoting the worst forms of political correctness. Chapter 9 discusses the allocation of faculty time between teaching and research. With the exception of Lindenwood and a small number of other schools, virtually all of the 575,000 full-time professors on U.S. campuses are expected to conduct research and publish. Yet only a small fraction of the research is at all important. Research conducted in the "hard sciences" and medicine often has far ranging value. But there is much evidence that what passes for research in the humanities, social sciences, business, and education is of little consequence and appears to be conducted mainly to satisfy requirements for academic tenure. A central contention of this book is that such research would be a harmless diversion if it did not come at such a great cost: the draining of much of the intellectual capital of the university away from the critical task of teaching. Chapter 10 describes the faculty at a teaching university such as Lindenwood, where the professor's responsibilities are similar to what they were years ago, before the research university model was adopted wholesale by most colleges and universities. Professors at Lindenwood are expected to take a student-centered approach, with heavy teaching and advising responsibilities, but with few research expectations and minimal management and committee work. While Lindenwood is no academic Utopia—in particular, a professor whose interests gravitate to the creation of knowledge through research rather than the transmission of knowledge through teaching would likely find the place downright inhospitable—the school enjoys a remarkably committed faculty and seems generally devoid of the intra-university turf wars that take place on other campuses.

The book's final chapters deal with the university's governance. Chapter 11 makes the point that while Lindenwood has grown rapidly in number of people and facilities, it has not become a particularly complex institution to manage. Adhering to its student-focused mission, the board and top management do not have great difficulty in determining how to plan or shepherd resources. And, for the same reason, the university has been able to dispense with much of the administrative apparatus typical of a modern university, replacing it with a lean and relatively horizontal organization, free of the unwieldy bureaucracies and warring fiefdoms that plague much of higher education. With a trim administration, coupled with a faculty devoted largely to teaching and advising, Lindenwood has been able to deliver a high quality product at an affordable cost. Chapter 12 elaborates on why Lindenwood has been able to buck the trends of higher education, with the costs of attending the school growing at a rate substantially *less* than inflation, and, at the same time, manage its operations in such a way as to produce three rarities in higher education: operating profits, a debt free balance sheet, and no dependence on government funding.

Based on Lindenwood's remarkable rejuvenation in the last few decades, the book closes with a number of suggestions—some modest, some perhaps audacious and controversial—for those in a position to influence the future of higher education. The list of such influential people is long, and it includes students and parents, as well as trustees, faculty, administrators, government officials, the media and donors. My fondest hope is that many of those suggestions will be acted upon and lead to two results: an enhancement in the quality of a U.S. college education and a reduction in its costs.

MISSION

CHAPTER TWO: CONGLOMERATES AND MULTIVERSITIES

The most important time to ask seriously,
"What is our business?" is when a company has
been successful...{a}nd not to have understood this
is a major reason for the present crisis of American
schools and American universities.

– Peter Drucker[15]

In the business world, the 1960s spawned the era of the conglomerate, an unwieldy organization that puts several unrelated businesses under a common corporate umbrella. Several hundred conglomerates sprung up in that decade and the next, all with the accepted conceit that, with centralized controls and "scientific management," vastly unrelated industries could be run on an efficient and profitable basis. ITT Corporation was the most prominent conglomerate of the day. Starting its corporate life as International Telephone & Telegraph, a straightforward telephone company, ITT went on a buying spree in the 1960s and within a few decades owned and operated 150 subsidiaries and affiliated companies around the world, including Aetna Insurance, Continental Baking, Anaconda Copper, Sheraton Hotels, and Avis Rent-A-Car.

ITT was not alone. Every major U.S. city during that time was headquarters to a number of conglomerates, if not as large as ITT, every bit as diverse. In St. Louis, for example, the International Shoe Company became Interco and expanded its reach beyond making shoes to running department stores and hardware stores. Another St. Louis company, Chromalloy-American, branched out much further from its original business, the processing of metal alloys, and wound up operating river barges, manufacturing offshore drilling equipment, running in-store photography shops, and managing hotels.

It is unlikely that today's reader will recognize the names of the companies mentioned above. By the 1980s, they, like virtually all of the newly formed conglomerates of that era, collapsed under their own weight and disappeared. ITT's Harold Geneen, once viewed as a genius "conglomateur," was eventually replaced by the company's board of directors and his successors spent the succeeding decades dismantling the poorly performing and unwieldy ITT empire.

In academia, the counterpart to the conglomerate is the "multiversity," a term coined in 1965 by the late Clark Kerr, at that time the chancellor of the University of California. In his important book, *The Uses of the University*, he portrayed the modern multiversity as a "remarkably effective educational institution" serving diverse aims and constituencies and combining the best of higher education, yet offered trenchant observations about its organizational foibles, such as: "A university anywhere can aim no higher than to be as British as possible for the sake of the undergraduates, as German as possible for the sake of the graduates and research personnel, as American as possible for the sake of the public at large—and as confused as possible for the sake of the preservation of the whole uneasy balance." [16]

Though not necessarily adopting the multiversity moniker, academicians associated with large universities generally acknowledge and support the broad and diverse aims of a university. In terms more specific than Kerr's, Stanford's Patricia Gumpert set forth a list of university missions:[17]

- Produce an educated citizenry
- Serve in a compensatory capacity by assisting those who are poor and disadvantaged to have a better life
- Contribute to economic development by training and retraining workers, and by supporting industry's interests with advancements and applications of knowledge

- Conduct research for national, state, and local interests
- Provide a place apart for faculty and students to have academic freedom, to foster cultural critique and dissent
- Serve local community settings as a good neighbor or partner
- Provide health care or support through teaching hospitals and medical centers
- Provide entertainment, sports, and high culture.

As daunting as the list appears, no doubt well-endowed universities such as Gumpert's Stanford, Kerr's Berkeley, and a short list of other major institutions are reasonably successful in reconciling the multiple and conflicting claims on resources such a list presupposes. In a similar vein, a handful of conglomerate corporations—General Electric, 3M Company, and Emerson Electric being stellar examples—have effectively operated a varied portfolio of businesses long before and long after the conglomerate fad. But the success of those companies does not validate the largely discredited conglomerate business model. Along the same lines, the apparent success of a few universities with distinguished histories and sufficient funding should not set the pattern for all colleges and universities.

Yet the pursuit of multiple missions seems to be the order of the day at institutions of higher education. Normal schools have converted to full-scale universities. States that once had one school with doctoral programs now have several. Universities constantly launch new schools and departments—and only rarely close them. Hugely expensive stadiums, field houses, and performing arts centers are constructed with little apparent educational justification. To garner institutional prestige, the great majority of the 575,000 full-time professors at U.S. colleges and universities are expected to conduct research and publish, though only a small percentage of their labor produces work of ultimate value.

The Illusions of Synergy

During the conglomerate movement, many of the unlikely combinations of businesses were justified by "synergy," a belief that when certain operations are joined together the value of the combined whole will exceed the sum of the parts. Executives of merging companies always expressed optimism, often proclaiming "two plus two equals five." ITT's acquisition of both Sheraton Hotels and Avis Rent-A-Car, for instance, appeared to be a naturally synergistic arrangement. Both businesses cater to the traveler and one might logically suppose that many opportunities for cross-selling and cost savings would arise. St. Louis' Interco, once the country's largest shoe manufacturer, sold a fair share of its shoes through its own retail outlets, so it may not have seemed that great of a stretch to acquire a hardware chain and other unrelated retail operations. But the seemingly logical combinations didn't work out as planned for either ITT or Interco. There are basic and incompatible differences between renting cars and renting rooms, and there are too many subtle but crucial differences between selling shoes and selling hammers. Nor did the combinations work as expected for Chromalloy-American or the hundreds of other conglomerate mergers with greater or lesser amounts of perceived synergy. Virtually all lost money for their shareholders and collapsed.

From time to time conglomerate mergers are still attempted, but by and large they represent a triumph of hope over experience. The largest recent attempt, the merger between AOL and Time-Warner, was accompanied by the usual talk of synergy. In this case, the "content" produced by Time-Warner's vast publishing and media business was to be married with AOL's rapidly growing distribution network of Internet users. Once again, reality eluded the dream. Rather than creating the hoped for growth through synergy, the stockholders of the combined AOL-Time Warner operation have seen their holdings shrink to just a fraction of their former value.

The Perils of Academic Diversification

Higher education also indulges an appetite for growth by undertaking activities with apparent synergy. But at their core, such activities are basically unrelated and formidably difficult to coordinate. The most logical sounding of all academic synergies, combining research and teaching, actually exacts the greatest toll in terms of the quality and cost of both research and teaching. But suggesting that those two activities, the twin towers of the modern multiversity, might actually work at cross purposes is anathema on campus, where the accepted wisdom of the teaching-research combination is that the *creation* of knowledge through scholarly research fits perfectly with the *transmission* of knowledge in the classroom. As a result, most colleges and universities engage in both activities to varying degrees, with schools that were once dedicated to a teaching mission becoming research institutions when they "grow up."

The growth and directions of the eighteen schools within the Missouri system of higher education provide a typical example of institutional transformation. Since its founding as a land grant school in 1839, the University of Missouri at Columbia has served as the flagship research university among the state's publicly funded schools. Since that time, however, many of Missouri's other public schools have morphed into various forms of research institutions. The University of Missouri-St. Louis, for instance, was established in 1963 as a branch of the main campus in Columbia to fulfill the educational needs of commuter students in the St. Louis metropolitan region. It operated under that charter for many years, then in the 1980s pronounced that, like its parent in Columbia, UMSL would also become a research university.

On an even more ambitious track, Missouri State University began serving the needs of the Springfield, Missouri region as Southwest Missouri State Teachers College, changing its name and mission in 1972 to become Southwest Missouri State University. The Missouri legislature, after heated debate and fierce opposition from the University of Missouri, awarded its present name in 2005. The name change was made in recognition of the school's statewide draw of students, but also as evidence that the school was intent on becoming yet another research institution funded by the taxpayers of Missouri. For the first time, the school's current five-year plan—bearing the ambitious title *Imagining and Making Missouri's Future*—includes, as one of its five separate missions, that of becoming "an incubator of new ideas" through expanded research activities.[18]

The transformation of teaching colleges and universities into research universities has occurred not just in Missouri, of course, but among virtually all public institutions in all states. In *Killing the Spirit*, a wide-ranging attack on academic folly and excesses, historian and former provost in the University of California system, Page Smith, commented on the trend:

> So what we have are state colleges (and, trailing behind them, teachers' colleges) striving desperately to upgrade themselves into legitimate (or illegitimate) universities instead of being content to teach students well. Seeing their colleagues in the better-known and more prestigious universities enjoying all kinds of cushy perquisites—teaching loads light as a feather, semi-sabbaticals, frequent additional leaves with grants, etc.—the state-college faculties would be less than human if they did not aspire to the same status...[19]

All of this institutional growth and transformation has come about with scant evidence of beneficial synergy. Much of this book, in fact, argues the opposite, that the quality of education, especially at the undergraduate level, is more often than not impaired by academic research. As more schools emphasize research, faculty teaching loads and the school year have contracted to accommodate the changed emphasis. Yet a study by the UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that in the years reviewed (1991 through 1993) forty-one percent of professors failed to publish anything in a professional journal. The average yearly publication output for all full-time professors was one article.[20]

If the research that is produced at universities were of uniformly high quality and usefulness, the diversion of financial and faculty resources towards that end would be more understandable. Unfortunately, that is far from the case. The great majority of the nation's 2,200 four-year colleges and universities *require* that their professors both teach and publish research, but virtually all important peer-reviewed publication emanates from a small number of long established and prestigious research institutions. The subject of academic research is covered at greater length in Chapter 9, but as a generalization, much of what is tagged research by professors is either derivative or inconsequential. By and large, the highest and best use of most professors would be elsewhere, in particular in the classroom, improving the quality of education and reducing its cost.

From Research University to Multiversity

A multiversity is created when a school takes on enterprises that take it even further afield from its research and teaching missions. Professor Gumpert's enumeration of the possible university enterprises at the beginning of this chapter provides a laundry list for schools aspiring to the multiversity level. But despite the apparent synergies, the activities on her list usually devalue the central mission of education and cause disproportionate increases in the cost of running the institution.

The continued growth of big time, big business athletic programs is the most visible example of wrongheaded university management. Physical education should be an important component of a young adult's development, and intercollegiate sports grew out of the beneficial impulse of colleges to expand physical education programs beyond the campus. But a significant portion of today's college sports has become a disgrace to higher education.

With few exceptions, universities with high-profile sports teams invariably create a double standard on their campuses. Superstar athletes, with watered down or specially designed courses, go through college—unless they are wooed away earlier by multi-million dollar contracts from professional sports team—with lower academic expectations, lower behavioral standards, and lower financial requirements than the rest of the student body. They also tend to be set apart from the student body, attending specially designed classes and using separate facilities, acting much like an in-resident, semi-professional team.

Nearly every day there seems to be an article in the news—at least in the sports news—about some recruiting violation, financial impropriety, or crime involving college athletes. And even when the trouble involves assault, rape, or another form of violent crime, university administrations can be embarrassingly reluctant to take action. Fanatic alumni and exuberant undergraduate fans notwithstanding, the double standard invariably saps morale on campus and tarnishes credibility in the larger community.

The double standard on campus is generally acknowledged, but lesser known is the financial burden major athletic programs place on the universities. While a few schools that enjoy major media attention manage to turn a profit with their sports programs, the majority of schools do not. The Knight Commission's recent study of NCAA teams found that colleges were in a frantic race for athletic fame, increasing spending on intercollegiate athletic programs at a rate four times that on other university business. Yet with all that spending, the commission reports that only a minority of schools actually makes money with such programs. With capital costs factored in, the commission found that only 12 of the 325 NCAA Level I schools had revenues sufficient to cover expenditures.[21]

It isn't surprising that when colleges sponsor spectator sports they lose money. After all, who could be less well equipped than an academic administrator to understand and manage a media and entertainment venture? But despite overwhelming evidence of the folly, the commission does not seem to have made much headway in dissuading the stewards of colleges and universities from throwing their institution's money into the black hole of sports.

There is no Knight Commission that has looked into the success of other entertainment venues run by universities, but one would expect the record to be equally grim. A case in point may be found at the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center on the campus of University of Missouri-St. Louis. The center, which opened with construction and startup costs of $52 million, has a mission to bring cultural opportunities to the greater St. Louis *community.* It attempts to do so by bringing in various performing companies and staging shows that range from one-man peformances to grand opera.

UMSL's undertaking the Touhill Center to provide cultural opportunities for the broader community fits one of Professor Gumpert's accepted missions of a university. But in this case, is it necessary? The St. Louis region is not a cultural wasteland in which a publicly funded institution is the last hope for relief. Rather, St. Louis has a rich, diverse, and longstanding roster of performing venues and organizations, many of them of world renown. If an additional major arts and entertainment center had been justified, presumably it would not be difficult to fill the seats and operate in the black.* But it has been exceedingly difficult to find an audience at the Touhill, and as a result the center has recorded seven figure deficits since its opening. The university's official position is that the deficits will be eliminated by 2010, but in the interim, Missouri's taxpayers and the school's students will have provided a major subsidy to UMSL's entertainment venture.[22]

Beyond community service, the other justification for the performing arts center is that it serves an academic purpose like any other structure on campus. Yet there are rarely students in the audience or on the stage, and the school does not have a significant music or dance program—at least not one that justifies the erection of a $52 million building. Making matters worse, the university's students—most of whom are commuters whose interests and studies are not in the fine arts—are paying special fees to reduce the yearly deficits.

In another growth and diversification move, UMSL announced in 2006 that a portion of its campus would become devoted to a research park for business, one that will house a new business incubator and supercomputer facility. In announcing the new venture, UMSL's Chancellor stated "a public university is expected to feed economic development."[23] The early announcements from the

* There also is anecdotal evidence that the new Touhill Center served to discourage the building or renovation of other St. Louis area cultural and entertainment facilities. Such facilities would no doubt have been constructed and managed by individuals with greater expertise in providing cultural entertainment than that possessed by educators and funded by taxpayers.

university have emphasized the hoped for institutional synergy: joint research projects between corporate users of the surpercomputer and the university, revenues from the facility to be used for more research (UMSL expects to earn $200,000 per year from the center), and new start-up businesses, made successful as a result of advice from the school's business and scientific faculty members.[24]

Everyone wishes the research park success, especially those of us who depend on the prosperity of the St. Louis region. Such success will require expertise in information technology, which UMSL has, but it will also depend on experience and expertise in several other fields, such as real estate development, venture capital investing, leasing, joint venture arrangements, and licensing agreements. On the question of whether UMSL's academics and administrators embody enough of those skills to make the project a benefit to the community, I remain dubious and fearful that Missouri's taxpayers may wind up paying for expensive lessons learned.

The Persistence of the Multiversity

Conglomerates eventually collapsed. Rather than spreading costs across many companies, the collection of unrelated business created *more* costs and bureaucracy. Corporate politics—a force to be reckoned with even in the best run companies—took on new importance as remote managers made the corporate plans and decided which businesses deserved access to capital. Most important, management lost its focus in the vain attempt to master, much less manage, the dynamics and nuances of too many businesses. The death knell for the conglomerate movement was rung in the 1980s as worldwide competition, especially from the Asian countries, forced American business to operate on a much more efficient basis. The conglomerate carried too much operational baggage to survive in the unforgiving global markets. In response, the boards of directors—if they were not already voted out peacefully or by a dissident shareholder group—authorized the dismantling of the unmanageable empires they had earlier created.

Unfortunately, a similar, self-correcting movement has not taken hold in higher education. If costs, operational efficiency, and quality of output are any indicators, the performance of most colleges and universities puts them in a league with the least successful conglomerate. Tuition increases outpace inflation with no attendant improvements in the product offered to students; schools continue to make unwise forays into research, athletic programs, and entertainment venues; outsized bureaucracies are predominant on the campus, with countless provosts, vice-provosts, deans and associate deans, and department heads attempting to manage the mess. Yet far from dying off, the multiversity remains the model for a major portion of higher education and represents the ultimate aspiration of ambitious college administrators.

What accounts for the different fates of the conglomerate and the multiversity? A major part of the problem is that there is no established measure of success, no bottom line for institutions of higher education. In the business world the market value of a company, as measured by its stock price, serves as the measure of success. That price is not always a perfect reflection of value—as the once lofty stock prices of fraud-ridden companies like Enron, Tyco and Worldcom will attest—but over the long run what investors are willing to pay to own a business provides a reliable gauge of its worth.*

Likewise, a change in the stock price, especially a major decrease, often serves as a call to action. When the hoped for synergies of the AOL-Time Warner merger didn't pan out, the company's stock dropped from about $60 per share when the deal closed to as low as $9. The board responded by scaling back—cutting costs, selling assets, and changing management.

For much of higher education, the bottom line appears to be prestige. Yet the pursuit of prestige invariably puts perception over performance and is manifested in the erection of underutilized performance centers, the fielding of sports

* I expect a reasonable case could be made that the companies that stray from a focused mission are also more susceptible to fraudulent behavior. Enron was once a fairly simple pipeline distribution company whose legal troubles began after they entered new and sometimes exotic fields such as commodities, trading (and apparently manipulating) energy futures. Tyco, now in the process of dismantlement, was a messy and sprawling conglomerate.

teams that drain the institutions finances and credibility, and the launching of ever more research that adds little to the public weal. In the case of UMSL's research park, for instance, successes will be trumpeted with press releases, but, with its activities intertwined with the University of Missouri system, it is unlikely that overall financial or operational success of the project will ever be ascertainable.

A Juggling Act

Many responsible critics question the long-term wisdom of institutions of higher education becoming academic conglomerates at the expense of fulfilling their primary teaching mission. In his preface to *Crisis in the Academy* —a follow up to his definitive *American Higher Education: A History*—Christopher Lucas offers a colorful speculation on the precarious future of the multiversity:

> …it appears to have been the inevitable result of an academic system seeking to garner popular support by attempting in most times and places to be all things to all people. In the process, a single model of the university as a multipurpose institution dedicated simultaneously to teaching, research, and service has gained the ascendancy. Its predicament at this historic juncture, it must be observed, is not unlike the juggler balancing too many objects in midair. The spectacle is awe-inspiring, vastly entertaining even. But whether and for how long it can be sustained seem open to serious question.[25]

Whatever the duration of the multiversity movement, it is clear that most colleges and universities today, like business conglomerates before them, are taking on more than they can reasonably manage. And it seems equally clear that all of their frenzied activity has led to no discernible improvement in the quality of higher education. Rather, as institutions of higher education pursue multiple missions, the vital, if less glamorous, job of teaching undergraduates depreciates in value at those institutions.

CHAPTER THREE: HEDGEHOG IN THE ACADEMY

The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog
knows just one big thing.

-- Isaiah Berlin

While conducting research for this book, I came upon the ten-year strategic plan for Lindenwood University that had been prepared in 1993 for the years 1994 through 2004.[26] In reviewing the plan with the benefit of hindsight I was struck by a number of things, but especially by the plan's conservatism. The plan projected that its core student population of full-time undergraduate students would have grown in that ten year period from approximately 1,500 in 1993 to 2,000 in 2004. But in fact, the school's undergraduate population grew well beyond the projections and at this writing there are over 4,000 undergraduate students at Lindenwood, most of whom live on the campus.

Lindenwood's growth, unaccompanied by any borrowing or government funding, is one of the great stories in American higher education. But in 1993 I suppose the conservative, even cautionary, tone that pervaded the ten-year plan was understandable. Despite the school's long history and the meaningful role it once played as a high quality liberal arts college for women, Lindenwood was in desperate shape just a few years earlier.[27] When the newly appointed president, Dennis Spellmann, took on the job of revitalizing the school in 1989, he found a spacious and charming campus, full of linden trees and architecturally imposing Georgian buildings. But much of the acreage under those buildings had been sold during the 1980s to stave off bankruptcy. The endowment had been depleted and over the years the school had accumulated more debt than it could reasonably hope to repay. The residential student population had shrunk to a low of 230. The skeleton faculty that remained was experienced, competent, and academically diverse, but their classrooms had few students and most professors were looking for other jobs.

President Spellmann found himself presiding over an institution in crisis, but the school's dire condition also presented him with an opportunity not available to many newly arrived university presidents: a charter to jettison the remains and redesign an institution of higher education from scratch. The details of how Lindenwood redesigned itself is the subject of much of the remainder of this book, but at its core are two key elements: a methodical growth program and a student-focused mission statement.

The Lindenwood Flywheel

Lindenwood's 1994-2004 plan differed from the hundreds I had reviewed in my former career as an investment banker. In my earlier experience, when companies sought new funding, they invariably arrived with an expansion plan that was exuberant in its growth ambitions—and ravenous it its appetite for new capital to finance those ambitions. The Lindenwood plan was neither. Rather, it showed a modest but consistent growth in the size of its student body—a hundred or so additional students each year—and an aversion to borrowing money. President Spellman, after spending his first several years in office paying off the institution's ill conceived borrowing programs and reacquiring assets that had been sold to keep the school afloat, was understandably wary of mortgaging the future.

While contradictory on its face, the spectacular growth that Lindenwood experienced in recent years has come about *despite* a step-by-step, easy-as-you-go policy in earlier years. Yet that kind of growth pattern—slow and methodical in the early years, followed by exponential growth later—is common among successful enterprises. In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins and his researchers at Stanford University screened the universe of publicly traded U.S. companies and identified eighteen that became "great" by virtue of transforming themselves from established but mediocre performers to companies that produced superior results on a long term basis.[28] Subtitled *Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*, Collins and his team identified a number of factors that great companies tended to have in common and which account for success. Among those factors was the "flywheel," a way of explaining how companies begin slowly but surely and eventually gain great momentum:

> Pushing with great effort, you get the flywheel to inch forward, moving almost imperceptibly at first. You keep pushing and...get the flywheel to complete one entire turn. You keep pushing, and the flywheel begins to move a bit faster...then, as at some point—breakthrough! The momentum of the thing kicks in your favor. You're pushing no harder than during the first rotation, but the flywheel goes faster and faster.[29]

Lindenwood's resurgence conforms to the flywheel explanation. In the early years of step-at-a time growth hardly anyone noticed. Based on the underestimation of student enrollment, I expect that when Spellmann and others at Lindenwood were putting together their ten-year plan, they too were unaware of the effect of the flywheel. The exponential growth in the later years, far in excess of the modest year-to-year projections, was obviously unanticipated. That unanticipated growth was no doubt due in part to an aggressive recruiting mentality that is promoted to the school's faculty and staff. But it was probably due more importantly to a form of "viral marketing," with the word invariably spreading among prospective students and their parents—by word-of-mouth; the university does very little advertising—that Lindenwood was providing a quality education at an affordable price. As students enjoyed their educational experience and found themselves well equipped for the workplace, they told others. The Lindenwood flywheel accelerated.

"One Big Thing:" Educating Students

But explaining the mechanics of the flywheel and its application to Lindenwood begs the more important question: What is it about Lindenwood's teaching university model that makes its educational product successful enough to generate the accelerating growth in the first place, separating it from the "old Lindenwood" and, indeed, from the great majority of other colleges and universities? The answer is even more simple, but no less provocative, than the flywheel concept, and is described by Collins as the "Hedgehog Concept."

Borrowing from Isaiah Berlin's categorization of people into two groups—foxes and hedgehogs—Collins found that successful companies tended to be like hedgehogs, curious looking animals that manage to frustrate the fox's cunning at every turn with a simple defensive strategy of curling up in its ball of porcupine-like spikes when attacked. In Berlin's words, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows just one big thing."[30] It turns out that all eleven companies identified as great in Collins' study are hedgehog-like. They operate with a single unifying concept—Walgreens and convenience of location, Nucor and low-cost steel production, etc. They reduce their businesses to its basic elements and discard business activities, including those disguised as opportunities, that distract from that concept.

Collins found that when compared to their less successful peer companies "[t]hose [managers] who led the comparison companies tended to be foxes, never gaining the clarifying advantage of a Hedgehog Concept, being instead scattered, diffused, and inconsistent."[31] The conglomerate corporation discussed in Chapter 2 is, of course, the polar opposite of a hedgehog company. Conglomerates attempted to spread their ambitions throughout the business landscape with no apparent underlying theme other than a (usually futile) search for synergy.

In both strategy and results, Lindenwood University is a hedgehog. Of the eight purposes of a university set forth in the previous chapter by Professor Gumpert, Lindenwood "knows just one big thing" and its sole ambition is to accomplish just one of Gumpert's listed items: *To produce an educated citizenry.*

The university's mission statement, omnipresent on its campus, embellishes only slightly, stating "Lindenwood University offers values-centered programs leading to the development of the whole person—an educated, responsible citizen of a global community." With its sole focus on the student, Lindenwood makes no pretense of conducting research for various interests, creating entertainment and cultural venues for the broader community, engaging in community development, redressing social inequities, training and retraining workers, or any of the other many missions on Professor Gumpert's list. Such missions are clearly worthy, but not necessarily within the province or competence of the university.

Beyond avoiding distractions and launching into activities for which it is ill-suited to manage successfully, having clarity of institutional focus has greatly simplified decision-making at Lindenwood. Any new initiative, however tempting, is summarily rejected if it doesn't contribute to the education of students. Any old practice—the awarding of faculty tenure, for instance—is abandoned if it isn't viewed to be in the best interests of the student. Putting this philosophy in practice was not always painless, and certainly not free of controversy, but the directions and decisions since 1989 have been remarkably obvious, unfolding logically from a mission wholly devoted to educating students.

STUDENTS

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENTS AS TROPHIES

The pursuit of prestige is expensive and risky.
A college may make large investments, often placing
tremendous strain on its financial health,
yet neglect the needs of undergraduate
students and other "customers"...
who don't contribute to its prestige.

– RAND Corporation Report[32]

Jann Weitzel, Lindenwood's provost, likes to say that she is more interested in what her students look like at graduation than at matriculation. Behind her statement is a value added view of education in keeping with the school's mission to *develop* "an educated, responsible citizen of the global community." As non-controversial as her statement and the school's mission may sound, they are both at odds with the view of students pervading much of higher education. Nowadays, the interest in the student at too many schools has more to do with their accomplishments and measured abilities when they arrive on campus than when they finish their senior year. The focus has moved from value added to quality control.

Institutional Prestige and Student Selectivity

The ranking of colleges and universities by the *U.S. News & World Report*, a newsweekly magazine, has had a great deal to do with the changed focus.

Before 1983, when *U.S. News* began publishing its list of "America's Best Colleges," there was no universally accepted measure of the relative excellence of institutions of higher education. But now the magazine's annual listing ranks colleges and universities based on a number of measurable criteria, with student selectivity and the SAT and ACT scores of the entering freshman class being among the most important ranking factors.[33] Each year *U.S. News* dutifully cautions readers to use its results in a larger context and each year educators publicly downplay the validity and usefulness of the measures. But at the same time the educational community now appears to be fixated on the results, leafing through the *U.S. News'* report each fall to determine which schools are national as opposed to merely regional; in which of several "tiers" a school finds itself and where it ranks in that tier; and, most important of all, which schools are moving up or down from year to year in the rankings. Tier Four schools strive to become Tier Three. Regional universities attempt to become ranked nationally. Number 12 among the top liberal arts colleges is hoping to move up to the top 10.

And just as a corporate board uses stock price as the bottom line measure of the CEO, university trustees use the rankings as a proxy for the effectiveness of the university's management. Alumni use them as a gauge of the continuing value of their credential and, therefore, as a justification for their support. Prospective students and their parents—*especially* their parents it seems—use the list as a kind of academic *Consumer Reports* to determine schools that may be a reach for acceptance and the schools that are "safe" to fall back on if admission is denied elsewhere.

This all out competition for supremacy on the *U.S. News* list has been characterized by some observers as an "academic arms race," and it's unlikely that any development in the last twenty years has had a more important role in determining the focus of higher education than the pursuit of institutional prestige. And because "student selectivity" figures importantly in the magazine's results, students have become the trophies in the prestige contest. With the *U.S. News* rating system, selectivity is measured by the percentage of students accepted from the pool of students making application. That makes sense on the surface, but some fear it promotes a rather cynical and expensive "recruit-to-reject" policy for ambitious schools. If a college expands its marketing efforts—enhanced student amenities, more recruiters, alumni visits—and produces more applicants for a fixed number of freshman spots, its selectivity ranking increases. Washington University in St. Louis (where I did my undergraduate work and which I now view as a relative who unexpectedly hit it big) is one of the schools that has been accused of enlarging its applicant pool for rank enhancement.[34] In recent years the university has appeared ahead of such academic luminaries as Berkeley, Chicago, and a few of the Ivy League schools, and some schools charge that Washington University adopted a recruit-to-reject strategy to attain that position. Whether the criticism is justified, or just based on carping by rival schools it has surpassed, there can be little doubt that the importance of the *U.S. News'* rankings has inspired a significant expansion in the hunt for freshman applicants at many schools.

To increase the number of applicants for admission, colleges and universities have become aggressive and expert marketers to students, especially to prospective freshmen. Admissions departments, once serving a backwater, bureaucratic function of screening applicants, have been transformed into flashy and highly efficient sales offices for attracting new students. On any campus, the admissions office houses the best dressed and most affable people on campus. At one time this office acted in a passive role, sending out the official, if drab university catalog in response to requests. Today "enrollment managers" distribute glossy packages and video presentations to carefully targeted mailing lists of students, to high school administrators and counselors, and to anyone responding to advertising campaigns that are carried out in the print and broadcast media.

The rankings also explain the full-court press schools employ in the springtime to convince student who have been accepted to actually enroll. Because most students apply to more than one school, colleges attempt to increase their "yield" through a second round of intense marketing targeted solely at students who have been accepted. Using telemarketing, alumni home visits, university paid student trips to the campus, and, sometimes, last minute increases in scholarships, colleges battle to increase the yield factor. If there is any doubt about the intensity of the battle, the discovery a few years back that a rogue admissions officer at Princeton had hacked into the student files at Yale puts that doubt to rest.

When new applicants or accepted students are interested enough to pay a campus visit, well-prepared student guides escort prospects across campus in what is essentially a tour of amenities. Alumni who haven't visited their alma maters for some time are often struck by the "country clubization" of their old campus. Standard dormitory rooms have been transformed into expansive suites. Functional gymnasiums are now spa-like fitness centers equipped to handle every conceivable exercise and sports needs, from treadmills to squash courts to rappelling walls. The student union is now a wireless-equipped entertainment center. And the student cafeteria has become an upscale food court that serves meals for every taste or inclination.

There is nothing inherently wrong with making college life less Spartan than many of us may remember, and no doubt the current crop of students—known as "millenials"—has grown to expect a higher degree of comfort and entertainment than their predecessors. Yet all of these enhanced student amenities—some would say indulgences—come at a cost and explain in part why tuition and other expenses of attending college continue to grow so rapidly.

I suspect that most college presidents would acknowledge that providing a relatively plush life for undergraduates is part of the game most colleges must now play, not just to attract the best students, but to stay competitive across the board. Yet it seems fairly obvious that behind much of their institutions' aggressive student recruiting is for the purpose of increasing student selectivity and *U.S. News* rankings.

Institutional Prestige v. Educational Quality

Stepping back from this, one has to wonder who's benefiting from this frenetic pursuit of higher rankings. Is it the young and often impressionable student trying to sort out college options in order to find the best institutional fit for a life-changing four years? Or just the university to enhance its *U.S. News* standing by boosting its selectivity and yield percentages. And since average SAT scores of incoming freshmen play a role in the rankings, what effect do the rankings have on outreach programs aimed at finding talented and motivated young men and women from families and schools not associated with high test scores? There is substantial evidence that the trend of scholarship awards in recent years has been redirected away from needs testing and towards academic aptitude (i.e. SAT scores) regardless of need. Clara M. Lobett, president of the American Association for Higher Education, wrote, "Indeed, one unintended consequence of the rankings craze is that it generates behavior totally at odds with our rhetoric about providing educational opportunity for all students, regardless of their backgrounds."[35]

As troubling as it may be that American colleges and universities are expending vast resources and making major decisions based on the *U.S. News* prestige meter, there is yet an even more elemental question: Considering the importance prospective new students and their parents accord the magazine's ratings, do the ratings incorporate any meaningful measure of the quality of the education received *after* acceptance and enrollment? The answer is an only slightly qualified no. The percentage of students retained after their freshman year is part of the rankings, but that is at best an indirect measure of student satisfaction and cannot capture the multiple and complex reasons why students transfer to another school or drop out altogether. The ratio of professors to students figures into the rankings, but that is a statistic with little validity at schools where professors conduct research as well as teach. As a rule, the more prestigious the university, the more the allocation of faculty time to research. And as a related rule, the more esteemed the professor, the fewer hours he or she is required to devote to students, especially undergraduate students.

Many educators—and, it should be added, *U.S. News* as well—have recognized the glaring omission of educational quality in the magazine's ratings.[36] But because of the difficulty of measuring teaching quality and "outcomes testing"—and less than full cooperation from the more prestigious schools—little progress had been made until 1999. In that year the newly formed National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) began surveying students to determine which colleges and universities were "engaging in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development."

The NSSE, launched with funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts and housed at Indiana University, has surveyed over 600,000 students at 850 schools in an effort to determine the quality of their educational experience.* The survey uses five categories of questions, or "benchmarks," from which spring hundreds of important questions (e.g. "How many papers or reports have you written this year in excess of 20 written pages;" "How often have you discussed assignments with an instructor;" "To what degree does your school provide the support you need to help you succeed academically.") [37] The NSSE acknowledges that its survey "is not a perfect instrument to measure student engagement, and student engagement is not all there is to undergraduate education."[38] Yet study after study confirms the validity of student engagement as the key to learning and the survey goes to the heart of the matter by asking important questions regarding student engagement in education.

The next logical question, of course, is to what degree do the factors going into the *U.S. News* rankings correlate with the NSSE results? The answer in this case is not much. One of the conclusions of a study conducted by the NSSE's director George D. Kuh and his co-researcher Ernest T. Pascerella of the University of Iowa was that the connection between a school's student selectivity and the degree of student engagement was minimal. And in some important measures, such as meaningful interaction with faculty, the NSEE results varied *inversely* with selectivity: "In one instance—instructor feedback to students—selectivity did explain 20 percent of the institution-level variance, but the effect of selectivity was *negative*, meaning that the more selective the college the less frequently students got feedback from their teachers." [39]

* Lindenwood University is not presently one of the schools surveyed

Since the selectivity of students is such an important component of the *U.S. News* rankings—Kuh and Pascerella showed that the rankings of the top 50 schools can essentially be duplicated by SAT or ACT scores—the study underscores the danger to students and parents of placing sole reliance on those rankings. The NSSE points out that its results and those of *U.S. News* are not mutually exclusive and that high rankings and good educational practices are obviously not incompatible, but that "prospective students and their parents could make troubling mistakes if they rely solely on the ranking of campuses."[40]

In evaluating schools, those prospective students and parents should seek out colleges and universities that have established reputations, but also would be wise to look for places that treat their students as *responsibilities* as well as trophies. As suggested by the Kuh and Pascerella work, and confirmed by the experience of countless undergraduates, the highly recruited students at many of the prestigious universities find themselves somewhat adrift after arriving on campus. With large lecture style classes, few required courses, remote professors, and little guidance through a thicket of academic and social choices, young students can find those universities bewildering and the attainment of a quality education largely dependent on their own initiative.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from the highly selective, nationally ranked schools are universities like Lindenwood, with only a very moderately selective admissions policies and little likelihood of reaching the upper rungs of the *U.S. News* lists any time soon. Yet many of those universities—and I expect Lindenwood is near the top of that list—put the student first, take their teaching responsibilities seriously and create significant educational value. The following chapters describe the student-focused path that Lindenwood follows, a path significantly different from that followed by much of higher education.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE "LIBERATING ARTS"

Colleges and universities seem to have forgotten that their purpose is to provide each student with an education—not just to process through as many paying bodies as they can.

– From a report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni[41]

As for what passes as a college curriculum, almost anything goes. We have reached a point at which we are more confident of the length of a college education than its content and purpose.

– From a report by the Association of American Colleges[42]

More and more, colleges and universities are devoting resources to academic research (however questionable its value), community and entertainment initiatives (however ill-equipped they are to manage them), and quasi-professional sports (however damaging to the school's credibility and burse). At the same time, they are falling short in living up to their central mission of providing their students with a high quality education, once the *sine qua non* of the university.

Decline of the Liberal Arts

There is no area in which that shortfall is more apparent than in the deterioration of the general education curriculum. While university faculty and administrators alike give lip service to the necessity of a strong and comprehensive liberal arts program to ensure that undergraduates are broadly educated—for the benefit of society as well as for themselves—their actions belie the rhetoric. The leaders in higher education universally endorse the importance of a solid general education, with mandatory course work in mathematics, the natural sciences, the social sciences, philosophy, fine arts, literature, language, and history, but their endorsement falls short of action.

Responsible and knowledgeable observers of American higher education are universal in their bemoaning the declining state of the collegiate curriculum. Among them is University of Chicago professor Allan Bloom. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, an improbable best seller in the 1980s, he wrote:

> [The] great universities—which can split the atom, find cures for the most terrible diseases, conduct surveys of whole populations and produce massive dictionaries of lost languages—cannot generate a modest program of general education for undergraduate students. This is a parable for our times.[43]

Although the problems with undergraduate education appear to have wide recognition among academics and serious people off the campus, matters seem to be only growing worse. When the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) surveyed the academic offerings at fifty of the nation's largest and most well-known colleges and universities in 2004, it found alarming indicators of just how deficient those schools had become in their general education programs.[44] Consider the following results of their survey:

- It is possible to graduate from any of the eight Ivy League colleges without having taken a single course in history or mathematics, and only one of the eight schools (Columbia) requires a literature course. Brown University has no required courses.

- Just two of the eleven "Big Ten" schools (Purdue and Penn State) require their students to take a mathematics course; just one (Iowa) to take a literature course; and none requires any government or history.
- Students can leave the following universities and enter today's world of awe-inspiring science and technology without having a single course in science or mathematics under their belts: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Northwestern, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, Smith, Vassar, Berkeley, Carleton, and Colgate.
- Globalization is affecting all aspects of the economy and society, but only 28% of the colleges and universities surveyed have a foreign language requirement for graduation.
- An ability to write well and to have read broadly are presumptions of a higher education, yet 30% of the schools surveyed do not require an English composition class. Only 12% require a "survey of significant works by numerous authors of acknowledged stature," i.e. a legitimate course in literature.

The decline of required courses of study at U.S. institutions of higher education is a relatively new development. Throughout most of the twentieth century, nearly all colleges and universities required a solid grounding in the liberal arts and sciences, with meaty survey courses covering the important areas of human learning. Roughly half of all undergraduate study was in required subjects, with the remainder in courses dealing with an academic major and a smattering of elective courses. In a former time, a college graduate was assumed to be, if not a Renaissance man, at least a broadly educated person.

But with the quest for "relevance" in the 1960s and a concurrent narrowing of faculty interests to highly specialized fields, elective courses gradually subsumed the "core" curriculum. At many schools today, those elective courses do not even have to be distributed throughout a variety of academic disciplines. In the worst case, students can spend four years in college picking and choosing from a smorgasbord of elective courses in any field, not straying much beyond "dessert" courses that are entertaining but without great challenge or lasting value.[45]

The abandonment of general education requirements has taken its toll. Perhaps no one needs to prove to dismayed employers that the basic intellectual skills of recent college graduates are in a free fall, but a recent report from the National Association of Scholars (NAS) puts the decline in a telling historical perspective. In 2002, the NAS commissioned a follow up poll constructed to replicate a 1955 Gallup poll of both high school and college graduates to determine the level of general knowledge attained by each group. The results were startling. The percentage of correct responses by 2002's college seniors to the entire survey of general knowledge questions was 53.5%, compared with 54.5% for *high school* seniors in 1955.* Though exposed to four years of higher education, today's college seniors know slightly less about their world than did individuals without such education fifty years ago. And, of course, the 2002 seniors know significantly less than their counterparts at mid-century. The college seniors of 1955 scored 73.3%.[46]

Apologists for the falling levels of knowledge have a point when they argue that merely knowing facts is not what a college education is all about. The ability

* A few of the 1955 questions had to be discarded or reworded to ensure the new poll's validity nearly fifty years later, but the questions that remained stood the test of time with respect to testing important areas of knowledge. Such questions included "Who wrote the play titled A Midsummer Night's Dream"?; Which planet is nearest the sun"?; "What is the national language of Brazil"?; "What profession do you associate with Florence Nightingale"?

to write, think analytically, make wise decisions, and understand—not just know about—the world are the hallmarks of an educated person. And with today's fast shrinking world and rapid technological change, most college graduates face a lifetime of change in which multiple careers will be the norm. Success in tomorrow's environment will be dependent upon those generalized, analytical, creative abilities that are developed through a liberal education.

But liberal education is the very course of study that has been virtually dismantled on most campuses. If it were possible to devise a comparative study of generations on more cognitive abilities, is there any reason to suspect the results would be any more encouraging than the basic knowledge tests? If science, math and philosophy are no longer part of a student's course of study, exactly where and when are those cognitive abilities supposed to be acquired?

What Went Wrong

No one looking at the typical college curricula can have any doubt about the deterioration of general education. It can no longer be assumed that a college graduate possesses a knowledge base that is either broad (conversancy with the broad sweep of U.S. and world history, proficiency in at least one foreign language, appreciation of the great works of art and literature, solid grounding in the scientific method, and exposure to the world's philosophies and religions) or deep (competency in writing and mathematics). But how did a college education, still considered a crucial punch on the ticket to success, become so watered down? Why are most students graduating from colleges and universities—from the prestigious as well as from the not so prestigious—with degrees in mediocrity? Here are the some likely causes:

The crisis in secondary education. The problems with K-12 education are just as acute as those facing higher education, but they are much better documented since elementary and secondary school students are subjected to academic achievement tests at various points in their schooling. The results of those tests, as everyone knows, have documented a protracted decline in comparison to educational attainments of past generations as well as in comparison to other developed countries, and those alarming results have sparked a host of remedial government programs, the latest being the Bush administration's legislation known generally as "No Child Left Behind."

Spokespersons for higher education, with some justification, seize upon the problems at the lower levels and make garbage-in, garbage-out arguments with respect to the disappointing student achievement at their own institutions. And they certainly have lots of evidence to buttress their garbage-in contention, including a recent survey by ACT, the producer of college admissions tests, whose 2005 report found a distressingly low degree of college readiness on the part of the 1.2 million students taking the ACT tests in that year. Particularly alarming was the finding that fewer than 25% of the test takers showed adequate preparation for college based on composite scores in all of the four areas tested: reading comprehension, English, math and science.[47] The results of the ACT study are mirrored by the opinions of professors, who witness firsthand in the classroom the lack of preparedness of incoming students for higher education. In a 2006 poll, faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities said that 84% of high-school graduates were "unprepared or only somewhat prepared for college."[48]

So, the logic would seem to naturally follow that if students enter college with an increasingly inferior academic background, there should be no surprise that the quality of the college degree they receive four years later has depreciated as well. With respect to general education courses, if students have never been taught basic reading skills, how much will they get out of Shakespeare or Kant? If they can't handle fractions, how will they handle calculus? If they can't write and speak competently in English, how realistic is it to teach them French?

Blaming a fall-off in the quality of the college product on the inferiority of the raw materials is a reason—but not an excuse. It may be disheartening that some portion of today's college freshmen need remedial education, but that just means colleges and universities will have to gear up to deliver such remediation more comprehensively and efficiently. And if students enter college with deficiencies in their own general education, the reasons for college to provide it are all the more compelling. Otherwise, higher education is simply perpetuating the problems of American education by letting its students continue to slide through their entire education experience without challenge or substance.

Emphasizing credentialing rather than educating. Colleges are remarkably free of oversight regarding their teaching performance. James Fallows, who writes on education for the *Atlantic Monthly,* notes that "[o]utside the academy, discussion of higher education usually involves what happens before students begin their undergraduate education (i.e. during the admissions process) and what happens after it is over (i.e. whether their degrees help them get appropriate jobs). What happens in between is largely a mystery."[49] His view is echoed by Carol Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities: "[College] figures in the public imagination as something of a magical mystery tour. It is important to be admitted; it is important to get a degree. But what one does in between, what students actually learn in college, is largely unknown and unchallenged."[50]

But the days may be limited for an absence of outside challenge to the quality of a college education. It is unlikely—and hopefully not the case—that broad government initiatives will provide the spark for increased accountability from higher education. More likely, the reform will come from employers—whether in the public or private sector, whether from industry or the professions—who depend on a predictable supply of capable and broadly educated college graduates. The early storm clouds are already building from business. Many companies are finding it necessary to provide basic, remedial education to their newly hired college graduates while others, frustrated by the inadequacies of traditional schools of higher education, are turning to Internet-based "e-learning." Cisco Systems chief executive John Chambers has been particularly forceful on the subject: "If universities don't reinvent their curriculum and how they deliver them…many students…will 'go to school' on-line. Many major corporations—Cisco, G.E., I.B.M., AT&T—are starting on-line academies to train new employees and to constantly upgrade the skills of existing ones."[51] Roger Schank, a Northwestern University professor of computer science, believes alternative education may eventually refocus the evaluation of colleges back to what is actually learned rather than the perceived quality. "Education will be measured by what you know rather than by whose name appears on your diploma."[52]

Displacement of liberal arts by vocational training. As commendable and democratic as Professor Schank's vision of education may be, distance learning, e-learning, and other impersonal alternatives to the traditional classroom generally cover the more practical and fact-based subjects. And while mastery of such subjects has immediate vocational value, it doesn't replace the longer term value of a broad based liberal arts curriculum in shaping students and giving them the vision and intellectual capacity necessary to adapt to and thrive in a fast changing world and society. Today's students are likely to change careers several times as technological and social changes continue to accelerate and render current jobs, and even occupations, obsolete in the future. They need the kind of education that gives them the ability to think broadly, analytically, and creatively. That form of instruction is best delivered in a small classroom presided over by a talented and caring teacher.

Though professionally oriented classes and programs have become more prominent on most college campuses, especially in fields such as business and computer science, there is no reason they should crowd out a general education curriculum. Quite the contrary, there is a growing recognition that a liberal arts background is becoming more essential to a business career. Peter Veruk, a former executive recruiter and now associated with Vanderbilt University, speaks for many in the business world, saying, "Companies are going to start to look at the fundamental value set of an individual and their basic education. Did they study philosophy and culture and history rather than just accounting, finance and engineering? Fast forward 20 or 30 years, we're going to find [business leaders] who maybe majored in philosophy rather than business."[53]

Disengagement by the faculty. The overwhelming reason for the de-emphasis of general education, however, is that professors have their minds elsewhere. As discussed more fully later, research activities consume the greatest amount of faculty time, energy and interest on many, if not most, campuses. The road to academic success—tenure, grant money, professional prestige—is paved by research, and it is only the rare professor who thinks much about such matters as core courses, distribution requirements, or the university's general education curriculum. As a generalization, they are apt to be more interested in their academic discipline and the affairs of their department than in broader matters affecting the school's educational programs.

By tradition the school's general education requirements are determined by a committee of faculty members. But for many professors, assignment to the committee is viewed as a curse, a black hole that will eat into time that could otherwise be used for research. And even for those professors who show an interest in the work of the committee and the broader welfare of the students, there is a bias towards accepting course work that is narrow in focus rather than broadly educational. If a history professor, for instance, has published in a specialized area, say, post Civil War history, he is much more likely to accept a course labeled The U.S. Reconstruction Period, 1866-1870 as a satisfactory option to fulfill a history requirement. Such a course is within his area of interest—and it will be infinitely easier to prepare and teach than a more appropriate course covering the broad sweep of U.S. history. As Lawrence Summers, the past president of Harvard University puts it, "professors are too inclined to teach what they want to teach, rather than what students need to know."[54]

Some observers believe that however commendable the aims of a broad and liberal education, the modern university simply has given up the task. Stanley Katz, director of Princeton University's Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, writes:

> But the fuller notion that the liberal arts are the core of the university has eroded badly—mainly, I think, in response to the university's attempt to satisfy concrete and immediate pragmatic social demands…My contention is that we have gone so far down this road in the major universities

> that we have reversed our priorities and now give precedence to research and graduate and professional training—in the kind of faculty members we recruit, in the incentives (light or nil teaching loads) we offer them, and even in the teaching we value (graduate over undergraduate students)... Our research faculty members have little interest in joining efforts to build core or general education programs, much less in teaching in them.[55]

Lindenwood's Program

Of course not all schools have abandoned their general education responsibilities. Traditional liberal arts colleges tend to be more conscientious than the research universities when it comes to designing and requiring a meaningful and intellectually challenging undergraduate curriculum. And, for whatever reasons, lesser known schools like Lindenwood are typically more attuned to "Gen Ed" requirements than nationally known schools. In Lindenwood's case, undergraduate students can pick from some 100 separate major fields of study, but they are all required to complete over 50 credit hours in the liberal arts—or, as some prefer, the "liberating arts."*

Many observers of higher education view Lindenwood as something of a maverick, and certainly the narrow mission and tough-minded management practices of the self-proclaimed "teaching university" put it at odds with most of its peers. But its educational goals are highly traditional and much in line with

* In Tom Wolfe's I Am Charlotte Simmons, the young heroine, a rather precocious college freshman, explains the connection between liberal arts and freedom to a fellow student: "It's from Latin?" Charlotte was the very picture of kind patience. "In Latin, liber means free? It also means book, but that's just a coincidence, I think. Anyway, the Romans had slaves from all over the world, and some of the slaves were very bright, like the Greeks. The Romans would let the slave get educated in all sorts of practical subjects, like math, like engineering so they could build things, like music so they could be entertainers? But only Roman citizens, the free people?—liber?—could take things like rhetoric and literature and history and theology and philosophy? Because they were the arts of persuasion—and they didn't want the slaves to learn how to present arguments that might inspire them to unite and rise up or something? So the 'liberal' arts are the arts of persuasion, and they didn't want anybody but free citizens knowing how to persuade people."

those of the ACTA. As set forth below, Lindenwood's core curriculum stands up well to the ten-point checklist the ACTA developed to evaluate and grade what college students should attain through a general education curriculum.[56]

First, they should learn crucial habits of mind: inquiry, logical thinking and critical analysis. Those aren't taught in any one class; rather, they are built up and refined over time as the student sees how great minds have wrestled with questions in many different fields of knowledge.

Lindenwood requires 128 credit hours for graduation. All undergraduate students, regardless of their ultimate major field of study, must complete 52 of those hours in comprehensive courses in wide and varied fields. Many are broad survey courses designed to make students suitably conversant in areas such as literature, fine arts, history, natural sciences, social sciences, religion and philosophy, while others, such as writing and mathematics, are intended to provide necessary competencies. Based on the student's interest, more often than not generated by subject matter from one or more of the general education courses, he or she chooses another 40 or so credit hours to satisfy the requirements for a major field of study. The remaining credit hours are taken in free elective courses.

Second, they should become literate—proficient in their reading, writing and speaking.

Lindenwood requires two courses in writing, two courses in literature, and a course in oral communications.

Third, students should become familiar with quantitative reasoning. In a world filled with numbers and statistics, responsible citizenship calls for an understanding of the correct, and incorrect, uses of numerical data.

Lindenwood requires at least one advanced math or statistics course.

Fourth, they should have a perspective on human life that only history can give. People with a grasp of Western civilization, world history, and American history are much better able to see the complexity, uncertainty, and limitations inherent in the human condition.

Both world history and U.S. history are required courses at Lindenwood; however, a course in U.S. government may be substituted for the U.S. history course.

Fifth, every culture has contributed to the rich repository of human experience. In an interconnected world, it is important to study cultures that may be very different from our own.

Lindenwood has a "cross-cultural" requirement that can be satisfied by taking two semesters of a foreign language or two courses dealing with world cultures outside of the U.S. Such courses are offered in disciplines such as art history, anthropology, world literature, and religion.

Sixth, students should have an understanding of the natural world and of the methods the sciences use to explore that world. They also need to appreciate what sorts of questions are susceptible to scientific inquiry and which are not.

Lindenwood requires two comprehensive "hard science" courses, one with accompanying laboratory work.

Seventh, to prepare themselves to become citizens, they should study the American political system and principles articulated in the country's great founding documents.

Lindenwood students are required to take either U.S. history or U.S. government.

Eighth, to prepare themselves to participate successfully in a dynamic economy, they should study economics and such basic principles as the law of supply and demand.

Lindenwood students are required to take two social science courses from a list of qualifying comprehensive courses in sociology, psychology, anthropology, criminology, social work, and economics. Approximately half of Lindenwood students take economics.

Ninth, they should learn something about art, music and aesthetics. Besides adding greatly to the enjoyment of life, a study of the arts shows the importance of disciplined creativity.

Lindenwood students are required to take one course in the fine arts. Roughly half take an "appreciation" course in art or music, and the other half a performance course in art, music, dance, or theater.

Tenth, in an increasingly interdependent world, students should learn a foreign language.

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Many Lindenwood students satisfy their cross-cultural requirement by taking two courses in French, German, Spanish, or Mandarin Chinese, or by taking two courses dealing with foreign cultures. For some majors, such as English and American Studies, students must take a foreign language through the intermediate level, but other majors have no language requirement.

Lindenwood is not in perfect conformance with the ACTA's criteria for a general education curriculum. The foreign language requirement, as explained above, is not absolute. Neither do all students take coursework in economics as suggested by the ACTA, since economics is just one of the several choices for satisfying a two-course social sciences requirement. And no doubt the ACTA could quarrel with this or that course as a suitable fulfillment for its requirements. With those qualifications acknowledged, however, Lindenwood appears to be much more responsible about delivering a liberal arts education than most other institutions of higher education. Over the years the school has continually refined its general education program and, rather than diluting the program's requirements with electives, has generally added more stringency. A quality liberal arts education is always a work in progress, but delivering that form of education remains at the very core of the school's mission.

CHAPTER SIX: SHAPING STUDENT VALUES: THE PROFESSOR'S ROLE

The creation of an enlightened, useful citizen
for the new country.

– Lindenwood's original mission statement, ascribed to founder Mary Sibley, 1827

Lindenwood University offers values-centered
programs leading to the development of the whole
person—an educated, responsible citizen
of a global community.

– Lindenwood's current mission statement

Much of the deterioration in academic standards and requirements described in the previous chapter appears to have got its start with the tumult on the campuses during the 1960s and 1970s. As administrators and professors bowed to student demands for "relevance" and more say in the curriculum, general education requirements became watered down with electives of questionable value taking the place of more challenging required courses. As though to make a mockery of the new dumbed down course of study, many schools and professors adopted a painless pass-fail system of grading, while others succumbed to grade inflation by indiscriminately passing out As for moderately competent work and Bs for little more than just showing up. The trends show little sign of abatement and the attitude of the faculty towards undergraduates is all too often one of benign neglect.

During the same 1960s and 1970s time frame, a parallel form of benign neglect and acceptance of lower standards took hold with respect to the *non-academic* side of undergraduate life. At one time, colleges and universities, and in particular their professors, assumed a more direct role in the out-of-classroom lives of their students. Much of this role involved the setting of rules and boundaries at college that responsible parents of young adults might reasonably set at home, hence the term *in loco parentis* to describe that role.

In the light of modern mores, some of those strictures now seem quaint. In the era of co-ed dorms, for instance, it's hard to imagine curfews for those co-eds, much less hours and rules for opposite sex visits. Yet a case may be made that in abandoning *in loco parentis* colleges and their faculties have likewise abandoned an important part of their job in shaping the lives and minds of their students for responsible adulthood. With students now bereft of guidance on individual and social responsibilities, and facing few consequences for unacceptable actions, many campuses have become settings for a troubling amount of behavior that is anti-social (for instance, raucous partying in dorms to the detriment of students attempting to study or sleep), self-destructive (binge drinking), illegal (drug use), and even criminal (date-rape and property destruction). While wild partying and undergraduate antics have always been a staple of college life, it is hard to argue that misbehavior on today's campus represents the *status quo.*

In Tom Wolfe's recent novel depicting modern collegiate life, *I Am Charlotte Simmons,* much will be familiar to anyone who has ever lived on a college campus as an undergraduate. But at least some of the description will likely be disturbing, and perhaps unfathomable, to those who are a generation or two removed from their term paper years. The book's scenes are full of casually entered into one night stands; the practice of "sexiling" (kicking out your roommate in the middle of the night in favor of a newly acquired sex partner);

weeknight (sometimes weeklong) partying in the dormitories; date rape (or, as depicted in one of the book's strongest chapters, something very close to it); and a nearly deranged and unrelenting variety of vulgarity in act as well as language. As in other Tom Wolfe novels, the depictions in *I Am Charlotte Simmons* can be somewhat over the top, but recent *non-fiction* accounts by university insiders describe a similarly disturbing picture of modern student life. (See, for instance *Beer and Circus* (2000), by Indiana University professor Murray Sperber; and *Binge: What Your College Student Won't Tell You* (2005), based on author Barrett Seaman's experience on 12 campuses; or *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student (2005)* by a professor who poses for a year as an undergraduate.)

My university has no magic bullets for solving the problems—and, for sure, not every one of its undergraduates is a model of good sense and behavior—but the school seems to have created an environment that fosters a mutually respectful and responsible way of life among its students. I may be hearing what I want to hear, but visitors to the Lindenwood campus, including those familiar with other campuses, seem to invariably comment on the courtesy and maturity of the university's students. In my opinion there are three factors contributing to such a positive undergraduate environment: setting forth clear expectations regarding student conduct, along with consequences for violation; instilling a healthy work ethic in students; and, most importantly, engaging the faculty in the creation of the "whole person."

A "Throwback" Code of Conduct

College alumni of a certain age who visit the Lindenwood campus might find student policies familiar to those they encountered during their own college years, including:

- A ban on alcohol and drugs on campus
- Same sex dormitories, with specified rules on visitation
- The presence of faculty or staff at campus social events

- Dress codes, including a general prohibition on wearing hats indoors
- Strict enforcement of quiet hours and other respectful polices in the student residences.

More important than the establishment of the rules, of course, is their enforcement. The university is accommodating, perhaps to a fault, in giving students with academic problems a second chance. Students with unsatisfactory grade point averages receive a great deal of assistance in developing study habits and skills to get them off of the academic probation list. Students on disciplinary probation, however, have a much tougher time. In adherence to the language of the university's student handbook, "correcting behavior and fostering personal growth are more desirable than punishment; however, disciplinary action will be taken when warranted. The University reserves the right, with proper notice to deny admission or dismiss a student whose behavior and living habits are judged to be detrimental to the welfare of the community."[57] And, in fact, unsatisfactory behavior at Lindenwood tends to be dealt with swiftly and firmly. If the infraction is great enough, disciplinary probation is skipped altogether in favor of outright dismissal.

The Opposite of Indulgence: Building Work Habits

The same alumni would also find the student "amenity package" at Lindenwood familiar to that available when they went to college—two-person dorm rooms, adequate athletic and exercise facilities, a few modestly equipped places to hang out, and a full-service, multi-menu cafeteria. But that list of student-focused facilities tends to pale in comparison nowadays to the cruise ship atmosphere that is becoming, if not the norm, certainly the trend on other campuses. That trend is manifested in the erection of ultra-modern, fully-equipped student unions and recreational facilities that cater to every conceivable student need, hedonistic or otherwise. Students can now spend their leisure hours playing university supplied video games, taking it easy in the student union's sports bar, shopping at a campus arcade, or just relaxing in a jaccuzi.

At the nearby University of Missouri-Columbia, the newly built, $50 million, "jungle-themed" recreation center on its Columbia campus was described by a local newspaper as follows:

> Eleven large plasma screens line the wall of the "jungle gym." The gym features about 100 pieces of cardio equipment, some of which have individual DVD players. In the "tiger grotto," there is a swirling vortex, lazy river with waterfall, whirlpool and dry sauna. Towering above it all is a jumbo, Vegas-style display board that blasts music videos on "ZouTv," an internal station that plays music selections based on weekly Internet polls.[58]

Paul Knoll, a principal in Pittsburgh-based WTW Architects, specializes in the design of college recreation centers and sized up today's students for the *Wall Street Journal* as follows: "These are the children of the baby boomers. They want services and amenities and shopping and recreation."[59] A spokeswoman for Cincinnati's Xavier University explains the school's recent moves to construct plush new dormitories and facilities by describing today's students as follows: "Their parents posted 'Baby on Board' signs in their cars. They have been protected as children. Their free time was replaced by organized activities and structured programs. They have a high need for achievement and attention."[60]

Fair enough, but one wonders if the indulgence—from the baby boomer parents who foot the bills and from the obliging universities that provide such amenities—is in the best interests of the student. In his book, *Hard America, Soft America*, Michael Barone describes the tendency in the U.S. for children to be coddled in their youth ("soft America"), only to be thrown abruptly, and often ill-equipped, into the real world of work and accountability ("hard America").[61]

What does a college life filled with the sybaritic delights of a "swirling vortex, lazy river with waterfall, whirlpool and dry sauna" contribute to making the transition to Hard America?

In addition to the intangible costs to the student and society from producing pampered graduates who are ill-prepared for the real world, there are the real costs of providing the student amenities. The typical financing plan for new student centers and recreational facilities involves taking on new long-term indebtedness through a bond issue whose principal and interest payments are serviced by additional student fees. Since the debt obligation extends over many years, those new fees jack up the cost of attending college not just for current students, but also for the next generation of students. And since students and their parents increasingly borrow to pay the costs of college, the immediate gratifications of the Club Med type amenities are often financed over time.

So far, Lindenwood has not joined the competition in providing student amenities and, when it comes to leisure time activities, the university is pretty much a no-frills operation. There is newly constructed cafeteria with separate sections for "comfort food," a grill, a deli, a salad and soup bar, a pasta line, and a pizza oven that would appear to satisfy the full range of student food preferences. A host of new and refurbished athletic facilities have enhanced the possibilities for individual and team sports. At "The Loft" students can spend time watching the single large screen TV or playing a game or two of Foos Ball. In "The Connection," located under the cafeteria, there are two additional large screen TVs and a pleasant patio. But that's about it.

One of the reasons for the rather modest amount of recreational venues at Lindenwood may be that for most students there isn't a great deal of leisure time in their lives. Virtually all of the school's students work. Most non-resident students, representing about 20% of the undergraduate population, are employed throughout the community—one is highly likely to run into a Lindenwood student on the job at most any retail store in the surrounding area.

Of the approximately 3,400 Lindenwood residential students, some 85% are employed in the university's innovative "Work and Learn" program, in which they put in ten hours per week at $8.00 per hour at some university job with the proceeds directly applied to reducing their tuition and room and board costs. Freshmen are typically given entry level jobs in the cafeteria, in housekeeping, or on the school grounds, but the work assignments are diverse, and Work and Learn students seem omnipresent on the campus taking on clerical and manual labor tasks.

The university, of course, benefits from its Work and Learn program to the extent the students reduce the size of the full-time cadre of unskilled and semi-skilled workers needed to carry out day-to-day operations of the school. But the program is set up primarily for the benefit of the student. Over the course of a year students are able to defray approximately $2,400 of their tuition and fees. In the process they develop a hands-on responsibility for the workings of the university and, hopefully, a sense of kinship with the school and its mission. In their junior and senior years, Work and Learn students are allowed to satisfy their 10 hour per week commitment by working off-campus at a social agency, service organization, or other approved not-for-profit organizations. As a result, a large number of Lindenwood students can be found working at shelters, at the YMCA, tutoring in programs like America Reads, and coaching community sports teams.

In addition to their academic transcript, Lindenwood's Work and Learn students are able to present prospective employers with a "talent transcript" that charts their progress over their four years in college in terms of their on- and off-campus employment and their involvement in extra-curricular activities. Based on student job placement rates, the transcript appears to be a successful supplement in demonstrating to employers a student's personal growth, skills, and leadership abilities developed outside the classroom. The late President Spellmann, who introduced the Work and Learn program during his tenure, told the students, "We can give you the skills and knowledge you need in the classroom, but if you're going to be an enlightened, effective, useful citizen, you not only need to be trained, you need to have some of the attributes like punctuality, dependability, and accountability."[62] At any rate, the Work and Learn experience is clearly a more productive use of time than just hanging out at the sauna or playing video games at the student union.

The Role of the Faculty

The Work and Learn program, with its dual goals of defraying the cost of education and building good work habits, is one of the defining aspects of the student life at Lindenwood. A less programmatic, but more pervasive aspect of that experience is the unusually close relationship between faculty and students. This relationship is meaningfully different from most other colleges and universities, where extracurricular activities and "student life" issues are usually shuffled off to a Dean of Students, who has a separate staff (and bureaucracy) to look after the student's non-academic activities.

But that abrogation of the faculty for responsibility for the student's welfare has been an unfortunate development for U.S. undergraduates. In *The Uses of the University*, Berkeley's Kerr described the disaffection of the faculty from the student as follows:

> ...the undergraduate students are restless. Recent changes in the American university have done them little good—lower teaching loads for the faculty, larger classes, the use of substitute teachers for the regular faculty, the choice of faculty members based on research accomplishments rather than instructional capacity, the fragmentation of knowledge into endless subdivisions. There is an incipient revolt of undergraduate students against the faculty; the revolt that used

> to be against the faculty *in loco parentis* is now against the faculty *in absentia*.[63]

While Kerr spoke mainly to the faculty's shrinking presence in the academic side of college life, a recent book by Derek Bok, a former president of Harvard University, bemoans the absence of a faculty presence on the non-academic side as well:

> In the end, however, simply handing over the extracurriculum to administrators is inadequate, because student experiences inside the classroom and out are often too closely intertwined to be kept separate in this way. Preparing undergraduates for citizenship in a democracy—one of the oldest aims of education—occurs not only in courses on political science or American history but also in student government, dormitory elections, young Democrat and Republican clubs, and many of the extracurricular settings. Learning to think more carefully and precisely about ethical questions can take place both in classes on moral reasoning and on athletic teams, community service projects, and honor code committees.[64]

Indeed, Lindenwood has a Dean of Students and a Director of Student Activities. But, unlike the great majority of today's colleges and universities, nearly all of the school's 71 non-athletic clubs and activities are supervised and coordinated by one or more faculty advisors acting in a volunteer capacity. The unusually high participation by professors in the student's outside activities—the *majority* of Lindenwood's professors wind up serving as volunteer advisors to one extra-curricular activity or another—helps provide continuity between the formal education and out-of-classroom lessons Bok identifies. It also brings faculty into the front line of accomplishing the school's aim of providing a strong dose of citizenship training to the college experience.

On another, though less quantifiable, basis, the faculty-student relationship is effectively illustrated by the President's yearly Challenge Address to the faculty. In that address, delivered each August at the beginning of the school year, the university's president offers challenges to the Lindenwood faculty, meant to both direct and to inspire—and in the process underscore the school's mission as a teaching university. The address in 2005 was devoted entirely to the faculty's obligations to the student. Those obligations, of course, encompasses the academic side of the job, and the president spoke briefly on the school's commitment to the liberal arts, cautioning in that year's address against guiding students towards an unwarranted specialization in their studies.

But the preponderance of the talk—fully 90% I would estimate—had to do with the role of the faculty in developing not just educated, but also responsible citizens. And much of the talk, in keeping with its challenge theme, consisted of a series of questions posed to the faculty. Some of the questions went to the heart of being a college teacher and included:

"Does your behavior communicate that you are other-centered?"

The question is particularly relevant. Being other-centered is a necessary (though not sufficient) characteristic of a good teacher anywhere, but at Lindenwood, with its student-focused mission, it may be vital. A need for self-aggrandizement and immediate rewards gets in the way of a job where the student's success is the ultimate measure of one's own success. For one thing, that need may never be satisfactorily fulfilled since only a small portion of students will ever tell you that you've been effective—or even helpful. Furthermore, their success, whether professional or personal, comes about long after they have left the classroom and therefore is ultimately unknowable.

It is hard to imagine how the question of one's other-centeredness would be processed by professors most other universities where teaching and students are not the focus. Professors at such schools, with their need to publish or perish and to gain tenure based primarily on their research, are almost *required* to adopt self-centered behavior, and that mindset is antithetical to good teaching. It is the unusual professor who would be comfortable spending the morning preparing cutting edge research for publication, and then meeting with students during afternoon office hours to go over difficulties they are having with their homework.

But nowadays, even at the schools where teaching is the primary focus, there is often a sense of entitlement to conduct research at the expense of teaching, or, more generally, to do anything at all rather than spending too much time with students. That viewpoint was expressed in no uncertain terms in a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by Paula Krebs, the editor of *Academe*, the magazine of the American Association of University Professors. Ms. Krebs, who also teaches English at Massachusetts' Wheaton College, wrote:

> Devoting all of a college's energies to nurturing students is unhealthy. It means the faculty members do not see themselves as members of a larger intellectual and scholarly community. We are not simply teachers; we are critics and chemists and philosophers who teach. We cannot serve our students well if we serve only them, just as parents who live only for their children ultimately do them a disservice.[65]

As pompous as her views might appear to those outside academia—it is hard to imagine a business person cautioning a company's key employees against being too focused on the customer, or a lawyer voicing concern that law firms were too client-focused—she probably speaks for most of today's college and university professors. Certainly we do a disservice to students by coddling them, just as parents do a disservice by overindulging their children. But the problem on campuses today is not that students are being doted on by their professors. The problem is quite the opposite, namely that too many students get short shrift from professors who consider themselves first as "critics and chemists and philosophers," and only secondarily as teachers.

"Do you walk the talk?"

When I began teaching at Lindenwood, I hadn't bargained on the role of mentor. I planned to teach finance and economics, pure and simple. I had long taught those subjects to MBA students as an adjunct professor at another university and never gave much thought to any goals other than helping students master those subjects as best they could. It quickly dawned on me, however, that my obligations to undergraduate students, well over a decade younger on average than MBA candidates, were considerably broader. A twenty-year old undergraduate, however, is still very much a work in progress—and nobody is more impressionable. For that reason, a professor, whether knowingly or unknowingly, plays an outsized role in the formation of his or her fundamental character and life directions.

So after I realized that the answers I gave to questions from undergraduate students—whether questions during the class on the subject matter or after class on a personal matter—were taken as gospel, I knew that, for better or for worse, I had more to teach than the workings of the bond markets and how to make discounted cash flow calculations. And when realizing further that I was in direct contact with those malleable young adults for between 40 and 50 hours during the course of a semester—a span of time more often than not longer than their parental contact—I developed my own list of related questions: Do I exhibit the kind of common courtesy they should emulate? (Am I punctual and do I follow up in a timely and reliable fashion?) Do I show them what it means to be properly respectful? (Am a receptive to questions and requests for advice and assistance? Do I dress appropriately? Do I listen to and weigh students' classroom contributions and outside-of-class concerns?) Do my actions set an example of integrity? (During the semester, do I adhere to the objectives, requirements, and academic honesty language set forth in my syllabus? Am I a fair and consistent grader?)

"Do you promote the university's values-centered emphasis?"

While many of today's colleges promote a values-neutral brand of relativism, Lindenwood, with roots as a Presbyterian-founded school, adheres to Judeo-Christian traditions. There is no formal tie remaining between the church and the university, but a convocation service opens the school year and a baccalaureate service accompanies the graduation ceremonies. In between those events there are a number of campus religious organizations and events, but with a campus now populated with students from over 70 countries, representing a number of faiths, the overall approach to religion tends to be more ecumenical than denominational.

Yet the commitment to moral behavior, ethical lifestyles, and spiritual values is unflagging and pervasive. And, again, it is the faculty that is expected to play the lead role with the student. In the course evaluations students fill out at the completion of the semester, for instance, there is a question that asks: "Did this course in any way influence your ethical, moral or spiritual development?" (Answers: a. To a significant degree, b. To a some degree, c. To small degree or d. Not sure) At first blush the question may seem peculiar for many courses, say chemistry or accounting. Yet there is no option to answer the question "Not applicable," and instructors are encouraged, but by no means required, to occasionally interpose such ethical, moral, and spiritual issues into their classes.

In my finance courses, as an example, I often interject ethical dilemmas drawn from recent events. A spirited classroom discussion is invariably engendered by bringing up close calls such as the Martha Stewart conviction, and by cases in which individuals were challenged to display moral courage, such as the whistleblower who exposed Enron's financial fraud. It is at once gratifying to see the interest in those cases, and surprising to see the range of views on the issues. I take the role of the disinterested mediator—or sometimes the *provocateur*—in the discussions and almost always make students put themselves in the place of individuals at the center of a tough decision. My objective is to instill in students some simple guidelines in determining right from wrong, along with making sure they understand the consequences to career and reputation that result from crossing legal, ethical, or moral lines.

While the drift of American higher education has been away from the liberal arts and the larger questions, and towards technical and professional instruction, I believe Lindenwood, along with a handful of other likeminded schools, works to the benefit of their students by purposely interjecting fundamental values into their curriculum. Comments on the subject by Thomas Lindsay, the former provost of the University of Dallas, are germane:

> Business education in this country is devoted overwhelmingly to technical training. This is ironic, because even before Enron, studies showed that executives who fail—financially as well as morally—rarely do so from a lack of expertise. Rather, they fail because they lack interpersonal skills and practical wisdom; what Aristotle called prudence…Aristotle taught that genuine leadership consisted in the ability to identify and serve the common good. To do so requires much more than technical training. It requires an education in moral reasoning, which must include history, philosophy, literature, theology, and logic.[66]

During their lives and careers, each of my students will be enticed by opportunities that are illegal, unethical, or immoral. The decisions they make when faced with those enticements will be shaped in some large or small part by the discussions they had with their professors both in and out of the Lindenwood classrooms. To use the favorite word of my undergraduate students, I can't think of a responsibility that is more awesome.

CHAPTER SEVEN: COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS IN PERSPECTIVE

Our athletic philosophy is inclusive, as is our educational philosophy: we believe all student-athletes, if they so choose, should have the opportunity to compete at the intercollegiate level in the sport of their choice, just as they have the opportunity to select what particular field of study they will enter.

– Statement of Lindenwood University Athletic Philosophy

A great deal can be gleaned about a university's attitude towards shaping student values by looking at its approach to intercollegiate athletics. At one end of the spectrum are schools with sensible athletic programs geared towards enhancing personal development through competitive sports. At such schools, there is not a great deal of media or other interest outside the campus in the outcomes of the games and competitions, but if the right kind of coaching is in place the participants benefit greatly from the experience. The playing field is an especially effective place to learn the lessons of teamwork, camaraderie, leadership, sportsmanship, and loyalty, and, at the same time, enjoy the benefits of personal fitness and health that come with dedication to a sport.

The Problems with Big Time College Sports

At the opposite end of the spectrum are universities in which the objective is not the welfare of the student, but rather institutional prestige. At those schools high visibility sports programs, especially football and basketball, are launched with the sole goal of winning and, presumably, adding new luster to the school. But the problem with the goal of bringing championship trophies to the campus is that the goal is inevitably achieved at the expense of institutional integrity. Frank Deford, a senior editor at *Sports Illustrated* and a long time observer of college sports, has developed an unqualified opinion of the effects of major sports programs on higher education: "The first thing to understand about big-time sports and academia is that they simply cannot work together. Never have and never will. Big-time sports…will always win and they will always adversely affect education."[67]

The fundamental problem appears to be that the available supply of athletes who are both academically qualified and of star quality is woefully short of the demand created by the hundreds of sports happy universities. As a result, only a very select number of schools are able to field high caliber (i.e. semi-professional) teams made up of scholar-athletes—or at least made up of players who have a legitimate shot at graduating with a degree in a respectable major field of study. So, at the remainder of schools determined to field championship teams, academic standards are bent or broken to accommodate unqualified students. Athletes at those schools, invariably with a full-ride "scholarship," typically float through the academic aspect of college life with a specially tailored, low expectation curriculum; with tutors who often have the expanded, if unofficial, role of writing papers and completing other assignments for the athlete; and with a light class schedule tailored to ever expanding seasons and practice schedules.*

Behavioral standards also fall by the wayside when schools have a championship season in view. The instances of misconduct among athletes are probably not as pervasive as academic laxity, but they tend to be more dramatic, and hardly a week passes without some account in the news of a university athlete arrested for some criminal act. The charges run the gamut, from shoplifting

* In a telling move, the NCAA recently voted to expand its football season from 11 games to 12, over the objection of its members who complained that the lengthened season would put an even heavier academic burden on the players.

to assault, rape and murder. At the time of this writing, the more egregious news stories included an Arizona State football player awaiting trial for the murder of a former teammate, and the lengthening rap sheet for the University of Tennessee football team which has had 20 separate charges filed against its players within two years for assault, gun possession, and a host of other illegal activities.[68]

Why leaders of otherwise respectable institutions such as the Arizona State University and the University of Tennessee feel compelled to recruit street thugs to wear the schools' uniforms is a mystery. A greater mystery is why those leaders sometimes contribute to the problem rather than correcting it. Just a few years ago a University of Missouri basketball player was seriously injured in an all-terrain-vehicle accident during a small Fourth of July get together at the home of Elson Floyd, the president of university system. It was curious enough that a basketball player would be invited to the president's home, but what was truly remarkable was that the player was attending the president's party—and riding the president's ATV—while on work-release from the jail where he was serving a sentence for assault on his girlfriend and other charges. The university's board of curators took no action against President Floyd following the widely reported incident and the player retained his scholarship and was eligible to play basketball for the university the following year.[69] (One wonders what the reaction must have been among Phi Beta Kappa bound undergraduate students at the University of Missouri, students who would be unlikely invitees to the president's house.)

To justify the capitulation to big-time sports programs, university trustees presumably perceive great benefits. But those benefits may be illusory. The Knight Commission, formed in 1989 and made up of former presidents of NCAA Division I universities, has been leading the charge for sports reform and maintains that trustees are relying on fallacious arguments that "don't wash anymore."[70] Among other problems, the sponsorship of major sports is a losing proposition for the great majority of institutions. Although sports related expenditures are growing at over four times the rate of other university spending, those expenditures are generally exceeded by their costs and only a tiny segment of sports programs produce a profit. What's more, there is no evidence that winning sports teams bring in more gifts from alumni or students with higher academic qualifications.[71] A. Bartlett Giamatti, who served as the Commissioner of Baseball following his presidency at Yale, summed it up by stating that he had never yet seen "the laboratory or library or dormitory built with footfall or basketball revenues."[72]

The ills of college sports targeted by the Knight Commission and other voices of reform are overwhelmingly associated with the football and basketball programs at the 325 universities that make up the NCAA's Division I. But the problems and excesses of those programs—think of basketball's March Madness and football's recently adopted Bowl Championship Series—may have caused the general public to question the importance of all college sports. When the *Chronicle of Higher Education* conducted a public poll in 2003 it found that the overwhelming sentiment among the general public was that sports teams were compromising higher education. Among the 21 posited goals for colleges and universities, the respondents to the poll rated "planning athletics for the entertainment of the community" dead last. In the same poll, only 35% felt that sports were "somewhat or very important to colleges."[73]

If the general public is dubious about big time college sports, a large part of the 99+% of students who are not on the football or basketball team is even more so. Despite the fanatical element of the student body that is captured by TV in the audience with painted bodies (presuming they are in fact enrolled in the school), most students have a jaundiced view of the university's role in promoting semi-professional sports. It is they who see first hand the double standards between the treatment and expectations of athletes, and who develop a well justified cynicism regarding the school's priorities.

Welcome to the NAIA

But far from compromising higher education, at Lindenwood, and no doubt at hundreds of other colleges and universities, college sports play a major, constructive role in a student's development. For that reason the university strongly encourages *participation* in intercollegiate athletics, and nearly half of the school's residential undergraduates belong to one or more of the school's sports team. With 38 sports teams from which to choose, Lindenwood may be one of the few colleges in which student participants actually outnumber student spectators.

Most of the school's teams play under the auspices of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, an organization of approximately 300 colleges and universities who compete to win, but who attract little media interest. Occasionally an NAIA athlete will become a sports professional—former St. Louis Cardinal and Baseball Hall of Famer Lou Brock, for whom Lindenwood's baseball stadium is named is an example—but I expect that few NAIA student athletes have their eye on that prize, but rather keep their sports participation in a realistic perspective.

The NAIA helps its member teams and their students maintain that perspective through rules that limit the amount of spending each school can dedicate to scholarships for athletes. In the case of basketball, for instance, the total amount of scholarships available is limited to an amount equal to six times the full cost of attending the university. The member school can divide up the total scholarship allocation among as many of its basketball players as it likes, but the cap applies to whatever size team it decides to field. An important modification is made to the spending limits based on the academic performance of the athletes in which students with suitably high grade point averages or class ranks are not counted in the player total.*

The NAIA system seems to have its intended results in limiting total spending by the schools, and also in nurturing legitimate scholar-athletes. In furtherance of its objective of keeping sports in proper perspective, the NAIA also establishes a report card for each of its member institutions, listing the won-

* Lindenwood does not offer athletic scholarships. It considers athletic accomplishments and potential in awarding financial aid, but not as the only criterion. Nevertheless, any financial assistance provided by Lindenwood is considered in the NAIA formula.

loss record for the collegiate sports it oversees, but also compiling statistics on academic achievement (including individual and cumulative team GPAs, retention rates, and graduation rates) and student social success (including leadership awards, student probations, and student dismissals.)

With the proper oversight and incentives in place—and with an institutional charter that puts the student first—athletics can and do add an important dimension to the college experience. I have noticed in my classes at Lindenwood that the athletes tend to take seats in the front of the classroom and keep up with assignments despite heavy in-season travel requirements. And I expect that is the case university-wide since, counter to the stereotype fostered by schools with double standards for athletes and other students, the GPA and graduation rates of the Lindenwood's athletes are virtually identical to those of the non-athletes.[74] Equally encouraging, and contrary to the big-time sports schools, Lindenwood's athletic director tells me that disciplinary problems among athletes are relatively rare. And last—and perhaps least as far as the role of intercollegiate sports in the long term development of the character of young men and women—Lindenwood's sports teams, in overall NAIA rankings, have been among the top five schools in each of the last seven years.

FACULTY

CHAPTER EIGHT: TENURE AND ITS UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

[A tenured faculty] is a mandarin class that says it is radically egalitarian, but in fact insists on an unusual privilege that most other Americans do not enjoy. In recompense, the university has not delivered a better-educated student, or a more intellectually diverse and independent-thinking faculty. Instead it has accomplished precisely the opposite.

– Victor Hanson
Hoover Institution,
Stanford University[75]

In 1989 faculty tenure was abolished at Lindenwood. It was among the first of many new policies that Dennis Spellmann put in place when the school's board of directors gave him day-to-day operating control of the university—and it remains one of the most controversial. Under the tenure system—an employment system by and large unheard of outside of academia and the federal judiciary—professors are awarded what is essentially lifelong employment after an initial testing period. The procedures for granting tenure vary from school to school, but generally a committee of senior professors evaluates the performance and potential of younger faculty members over a five to eight year period and then makes a yes or no recommendation to the university's provost or president.

On most campuses, administrative approval tends to be automatic so that the awarding of academic tenure is largely a faculty decision.

By all accounts, the removal of that substantial employee benefit at Lindenwood caused a predictable stir among the faculty, with reactions ranging from the resigned to the incredulous to the combative. Although most of its professors were aware of the university's perilous financial condition, they saw little reason for the revocation of the tenured status they had worked hard to attain, perhaps feeling it would serve as a life raft of sorts if the ship went down. And, they argued, if Lindenwood survived, the removal of tenure would consign the school to the academic backwaters, making it difficult to hire qualified faculty members to ensure that survival.

The professors certainly had the argument of conventional academic thinking and practice on their side. Nearly every major U.S. college and university offers tenure to its faculty and, because it is meant to protect academic freedom, the argument for tenure is always presented as a vital requirement for free and open discourse on the campus. That argument is buttressed by many episodes in the early years of the American university during which professors were sometimes summarily dismissed if their espoused views were at odds with the school's administration or its trustees. As a preventative reaction, tenure was initiated or strengthened throughout academia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and today professors on most campuses are protected against dismissal from all but the most egregious of acts. So there was reasonable concern in 1989 that dropping tenure at Lindenwood, with the implication that the school was also devaluing academic freedom, presented long-term risks to the school's reputation, and, perhaps, diminished hopes for its turnaround.

Yet an argument can be made a few decades later that defying academic convention and removing life-long tenure for its professors is one of the main reasons that Lindenwood University not only survived, but also prospered in the process. With its "refounding" in 1989, Lindenwood has avoided many endemic problems of higher education that have sprung directly or indirectly from the tenure system at other U.S. universities. Those problems include:

- the high cost of supporting a faculty whose senior members are largely unaccountable for the quality or quantity of its services
- adverse affects on the quality of education
- loss of the very academic freedom tenure was meant to promote

Tenure's Deadwood Problem

In the main, university professors are stimulating and energetic. But they are also human beings and, as any one who has spent time on a campus with tenure probably knows firsthand, a distressing portion of the senior professoriate lapses into a stultifying complacency and stays in their positions too long. When I was working on my PhD the chairman of the department assigned an advisor to me who, unfortunately, fit that description. After I had attended a few conferences with my advisor—a full-professor with a few tenured decades under his belt—it became clear that he was on a very extended glide path to retirement and less than eager for significant involvement in my research project. I was eventually assigned a new advisor and the chairman later intimated that he made the initial assignment in part to find something useful for his senior faculty member to do.

When a professor becomes "deadwood" other faculty members usually have to fill in to remove the slack, or, as a much more expensive alternative, someone new has to be hired who can (and will) perform. In the latter case, the institution is saddled with two salaries to cover one job, that of the new professor and that of the non-performing tenured professor.

In any other field, of course, employees not performing up to expectations are dealt with appropriately. Longtime employees are given "early retirement" packages; newer employees who are unwilling or unable to perform up to expectations are shown the door. But that's not the way in works in academia. After receiving tenure, usually while in their thirties, professors have the luxury of settling into the routine and commitment level that is most comfortable to them.

I expect that many tenured faculty members, perhaps even most, remain committed to their work, performing well in the classroom and in their research endeavors. They are motivated by many factors, including the prospect of professional recognition and advancement, intellectual stimulation, and a love of teaching. But it also clear that a significant number of professors will simply disengage. From the time proven laws set forth in Economics 101, workers tend to substitute leisure hours for work hours when there is not a compelling motivation to do otherwise. And the tell-tale signs of the lazy professor (whether tenured or untenured) are not hard to spot: easy to grade multiple-choice or true-false tests rather than more time-consuming essay questions and term papers; foreshortened classes; disregard for office hours; and casual advising. In general, it fosters the pernicious "mutually agreed non-aggression pact" between professor and student in which each tacitly agrees to do only as much as necessary to get by. Such professors, even if they are unrepresentative of the faculty, sap the intellectual energy of a campus and rob the student of a meaningful education. But regardless of their unproductive ways, there is little that can be done with such professors when they are protected by the tenure system.

Then there are the many professors who are far from lazy, but who, while protected by tenure, direct their energies outside the campus. Using their expertise, they take on lucrative consulting assignments for private clients at the expense of their academic work. There are no numbers to indicate how many professors use their daytime hours to "moonlight," but anecdotal evidence suggests their ranks are legion. In any case, there is little an academic administrator can do to curtail it. However tenured professors choose to allocate the hours in their day, they can do so with little fear of losing their jobs.

Even if all faculty members remained conscientious and dedicated despite the temptations of tenure, the system can still constrain sensible academic management, making teaching less effective and more expensive. Consider the problems of redesigning education programs around a tenured faculty. In my field of business education, globalization and technology have greatly changed the kind of skills and information students need upon graduation. When I attended business school we were given a healthy dose of "old economy" subjects such as manufacturing management and labor negotiations, but nothing that I recall in entrepreneurship and information technology. The former subjects are still important, but probably not nearly as meaningful for future leaders as the latter. But if a business school wants to fine tune its faculty for changing business realities, it may find itself constrained unless faculty in less relevant fields can be replaced, or "retooled," to add new teaching disciplines. I suspect the same institutional rigidity takes hold in other parts of the university. Today's students, for instance, may benefit greatly in their lifetimes by taking courses in Mandarin Chinese rather in the Romance languages. But it may be difficult to find room for a new instructor in Chinese with a language department full of tenured professors of Italian and French. In any event, a professor without the motivation to branch out of an academic specialty for which there is little continuing demand also becomes irremovable deadwood.

Whatever the manpower adaptations required in higher education, tenure makes them more difficult. In other fields, professionals change with the times. At law firms, for instance, lawyers adjust their specialties to keep up with a changing economy and society. Most environmental lawyers, as an example, didn't graduate from law school with training in that fast growing legal specialty, but rather tailored their practices in real estate law or other related fields to handle the growing demand for environmental legal work. But very little specialty shifting occurs in academia. The tendency, rather, is to delve more deeply into a narrow sub-specialty through research, making the institutional rigidity even more pronounced.

The Ironies of Tenure

There are many inconsistencies and ironies attached to the tenure system, and perhaps the most obvious is that it is a one-way contract. Tenured faculty members enjoy a lifelong employment option, but they offer no such reciprocal commitment to the institution they work for. They can, and often do, pack up and leave when another school provides a better deal. Many professors identify themselves more with their academic specialty than with the school they happen to be associated with and view their service as that of an academic contract worker. With that sort of independence, a university faculty is notoriously difficult to manage, perhaps the epitome of the "herding cats" description.

A second irony of the tenure system is the insecurity it creates in the *non-tenured* faculty. Life as a tenured professor can be very good; for newly hired young professor, however, the stretch of years on probation before the tenure decision is made can be a highly anxious time. They are on an up-or-out track, and know that if they are not judged to be up to the department's standards in their first several years they will be asked to leave. The first years' anxiety can be especially pronounced in academic departments that, by policy, hire significantly more new PhDs than will be promoted. Such a policy, of course, creates a highly competitive, even cutthroat, environment for the aspiring professor. And the do-or-die competition usually comes at a point in life when he or she is working under a multitude of other pressures, including starting a young family, paying off student debt, and establishing roots in a new community. If the tenure candidate is a young mother, the pressure is increased by a magnitude.[76]

A third irony of tenure, at least from the standpoint of the undergraduate student, is that the professors who are awarded tenure may be those who are the least motivated to spend time in the classroom. In their pursuit of tenure, candidates are expected to prepare and teach classes, for the most part the introductory undergraduate classes that senior faculty members often try to avoid, and they usually have some advising and administrative chores. But first and foremost they are expected to publish a suitably long list of articles in scholarly journals during their apprenticeship years. At most schools, good performance in the classroom won't harm candidacy for tenure, but the decision rests primarily on the quality of the research. Mediocre teaching performance will be overlooked if the professor is able to place an article in a refereed journal. As unlikely as it may seem to someone outside higher education, being voted

Professor of the Year by the student body does little to enhance the prospect of tenure, and in some instances may hurt it if the tenure candidate carries the tag of being "just a teacher."

The priorities in academe become readily apparent to young professors and they focus their time and energy accordingly. They may have been first drawn to an academic career by the idealistic desire to teach—perhaps even inspired by a great teacher they came across as an undergraduate—but they all have bills to pay and quickly realize first hand what "publish or perish" is all about. With those pressures, ministering to the needs of students, especially undergraduate students, can become a waste of valuable time for a tenure candidate trying to pull together data or lab results for a publishable article.*

The Unintended Consequences of Tenure

The final and greatest irony of the tenure system rests with its consequences. As suggested above, academic tenure achieved near universal acceptance in the first half of the twentieth century as a safeguard to protect professors from reprisal for voicing unpopular views. Early in that century professors might face dismissal—usually at the insistence of an offended university trustee—for teaching evolution, sympathizing with unions, advancing the abolition of child labor, endorsing free trade, or even expressing contrary opinions about the origins of World War I.[77] And, in the wake of further abuses during the McCarthy era, tenure increasingly became an accepted feature of higher education as a means of protecting the faculty from outside interference, and tenure continues to be

* Charles Sykes, in his humorous, if muckraking, *ProfScam*, describes a more extreme form of anti-teaching bias on the campus: "The indifference of the academic villages to teaching is readily understandable, given their commitment to research. But the virulence of the hostility is more troublesome. The contempt for teaching and the professoriate's ill-concealed embarrassment in its presence nevertheless provide an intriguing clue: The professoriate's teaching obligations are annoying reminders of their not wholly respectable professional roots—humiliating leftovers from the time before they were transformed into savants, gurus, and scientists. Professors were once mere pedagogues, and they have spent decades trying to live down the disgrace. The specters of Ichabod Crane and Mister Chips are always hovering. Faculty members who actually enjoy teaching cast a shadow on the whole profession, like an eccentric family member who chooses to move out of an elegant, well-appointed mansion and back to a tacky one room walk-up above an all-night convenience store in the old neighborhood." (p.58)

justified at colleges and universities as a necessary precondition of academic freedom

Unfortunately, as noble as the impulse may have been for the creation of tenure to protect academic freedom, the unintended consequences have been profound, as historian Page Smith points out in reviewing the history of tenure:

> Whatever its motivation, tenure turned out to exercise a decidedly negative influence on higher education. What faculties needed and deserved to have were review procedures that protected them from arbitrary actions by administrators or trustees. What they got was much more: a degree of security unequaled by any other profession and difficult to justify in abstract terms.[78]

Thomas Sowell of the Hoover Institution makes the crucial point that tenure arose out of threats to professors from views expressed *outside* the university. But as teachers, university professors have always been expected to present balanced views in their classrooms in order for students to make their own assessments of controversial issues. He refers in particular to the 1915 statement on the use of tenure from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in which professors were cautioned to avoid "taking advantage of the student's immaturity by indoctrinating him with the teacher's own opinions before the student has an opportunity fairly to examine other opinions upon the matters in question."[79]

But nowadays, Sowell argues, tenure protects professors from repercussion for views espoused *inside* the classroom. Today, going counter to the AAUP's position, he and many other critics believe that tenure-protected professors all too often use those classrooms for indoctrination, teaching students *what* to think rather than *how* to think. And the evidence from the students, most of it admittedly anecdotal, strongly suggests that many professors feel free to promote their own opinions at the expense of more balanced presentations.[80] Students, of course, readily pick up on the political and cultural biases of their teachers and in the spirit of attaining professorial favor—i.e. a good grade—will too often parrot or amplify those biases if they agree, or simply keep silent if they disagree.

If the political persuasions were more balanced on the nation's campuses, the practice of advocating philosophical and political views in the classrooms would be of less concern. Indoctrinating rather than teaching is never justifiable, but with a balanced faculty one professor's leanings might be counterbalanced by the views of another. Yet poll after poll indicates that the political views of the faculty are highly skewed to the left. UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute conducts a number of polls of faculty and students and in 2005 found that whereas over half of professors categorized themselves as either "left" or "far left" politically, less than 20% saw their views as "right" or "far right." [81]

Other polls have shown that there are significant differences within the schools and departments of a university and that the liberal bias is particularly strong, nearing unanimity, in the humanities. In a 2003 study, Daniel Klein of Santa Clara University and Charlotta Stern of Stockholm University surveyed the members of major U.S. science and humanities associations to determine their political preferences. By a fifteen-to-one margin, professors identified themselves as Democrats rather than Republicans. Anthropologists and sociologists were weighted thirty-to-one and twenty-eight to one, respectively. Economists had the least lopsided political composition with three Democrats for every Republican. Klein and Stern found that "the [Democrat to Republican] ratio is somewhat higher for the younger half of the respondents, which means that lopsidedness has become more extreme over the past decades, and that, unless we believe that current professors occasionally mature into Republicans, it will become even more extreme in the future." [82]

There is reason to believe that the tenure system has played a key role in producing the one-party campus. Stephen Balch, in a widely quoted article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, explains how the majority viewpoint tends to perpetuate itself by the way in which universities are governed, including the selection of faculties through the tenure process:

> ...our institutions of higher learning are ill equipped to thwart the power of the overbearing intellectual majorities that strong preferences and prejudices mobilize. In fact, academe's characteristic mode of governance magnifies majoritarian power. As polities, colleges and universities bear more that a passing resemblance to federations of small, semi-autonomous republics—in this case the departments that make up their main subdivisions. Those generally hire, give tenure, and promote their teaching staffs; fix major and graduate-studies requirements; admit and finance graduate students; award the doctorates that provide new practitioners with credentials; and help journeymen secure their initial jobs...[a]nd because the admission of new academic citizens is subject to the majority's control, as time passes those majorities tend to expand.[83]

The implication of Balch's analysis would seem to be that young professors aspiring for tenure take a similar tack as the undergraduates. They adopt the political leanings of the tenure committees as part of gaining favor and disguise contrary views in order to avoid the tenure blackball. In many academic disciplines, of course, political views are (hopefully) not a consequential criteria for promotion—the hard sciences, engineering, and mathematics come to mind—but in most departments the way a candidate views the world is likely to have a major affect on the way the committee is likely to vote. For that reason, it may be unlikely that a candidate for tenure whose political opinions mirrored those found, say, on the conservative-leaning editorial page of the Wall Street

Journal, would ever be successful in gaining acceptance into political science, philosophy, or English departments at most U.S. universities.*

An often suggested explanation for faculty's leftward bias is that the liberal, often radical, graduate students and younger faculty members who disproportionately populated the campuses in the 1960s are now deans and department heads. But whatever the reason, the ascendancy of the left and its ability to promote like-minded faculty members through the tenure system has created a stultifying intellectual atmosphere. Liberal faculty members, talking mainly to sympathetic colleagues, elevate their liberalism to a dogma—often loopy sounding to outsiders—and feel it is their duty to save undergraduates from themselves if they harbor different, more conservative views. Victor Hanson, fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University put it this way: "Sometime in the 1960s, many faculties felt the proper role of the university was to gravitate away from the Socratic method of disinterested inquiry, and instead to press for a preordained and 'correct' worldview. Since America was supposedly guilty of being oppressive to those not white, conservative, male, capitalist, Christian and heterosexual, the university offered a rare counterpoint."[84] The presentation of such lopsided worldviews in the classroom creates an environment devoid of intellectual honesty. At its worst, it creates a chilling political correctness that leads to banning speakers from campus if they are deemed too conservative and subjecting undergraduates to "sensitivity training" when they veer too far from orthodox views.

Yet a tenure system is not undesirable because it has created a liberal faculty. Presumably, conservatives would have been no less likely to create a monopoly of thought if it had been they who became ascendant on the campuses. (It has been all too apparent in recent years that like-minded conservatives of a fundamental persuasion can promote scary policies and viewpoints when they control the agenda at state or national legislatures.) Rather, the disconcerting aspect of a

* Anecdotal evidence would suggest that the conservative minority of the faculty makes their home in the business and law schools, as well as in engineering and other "practical" sectors of higher education. And in fairness, it may be just as unlikely for someone who shares the liberal bias of *The Village Voice* or *The Nation* to receive tenure at most business schools.

liberal or a conservative orthodoxy is that they are so absolute and unyielding to opposing views. So contrary opinions become forbidden thoughts, and deprive students of one of the primary benefits of the college experience: the ability to engage in critical thinking. In our increasingly fractious society, students should leave college knowing how to listen to, weigh, and consider contrasting arguments, and make decisions, especially when the decisions are tough and not unambiguously correct.

Academic Freedom and Tenure

I believe Lindenwood made its own tough, but ultimately correct, decision when it eliminated tenure. The school's administration was certain to know that the controversial action would subject it to profound criticism from the rest of the academy where tenure has long been a mainstay. But I expect the university's board simply examined the arguments of its adversaries as weighed against the needs of its students and faced some obvious questions. Would an unaccountable faculty be likely to provide a uniformly high quality of teaching and advising? Would a faculty that was self-selected based on one-sided political views provide a diversity of ideas to students? And, under the financial pressures at the time, could Lindenwood afford the costs that tenure exacts. Then or today I think it would be difficult to answer any of those questions in the affirmative.*

But what of the academic freedom argument? In my opinion, while academic freedom is a necessary mainstay of any campus, tenure may not be necessary for its achievement and, as argued above, may actually limit that freedom. Academic freedom has served as the noble banner under which faculties have marched to reward themselves with an unrealistically generous employment perquisite. And self serving professors have been able to tar opponents of

* The problems with tenure are viewed more skeptically at colleges and universities than one might suppose. A poll of college and university presidents by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* revealed that over half of them would like to replace tenure with some alternate system of short term contracts. That is not a totally surprising finding in view of the natural tensions between administration and faculty. But another poll cited by the publication finds that 37% of faculty members themselves agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that tenure is an "outmoded concept." ("Faculty Views," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 16, 2005)

academic tenure with a brush of intolerance of free speech, much the same way the National Rifle Association accuses those advocating gun control as being against the sport of hunting. But the presence of a tenure system has too often contributed to turning the concept of academic freedom on its head by promoting a one-sided view of proper political thought on many campuses.

In a more positive vein, I believe the *absence* of tenure at Lindenwood has had no apparent adverse affect on that freedom. I have never heard a single faculty member complain of any overt or subtle pressure in what should be presented to the student. During their ten-year accreditation review of Lindenwood in 2003, representatives of the Higher Learning Commission reached the same conclusion. They queried Lindenwood's professors individually on academic freedom in the absence of tenure and reported that "[t]he faculty overwhelmingly stated that their academic freedom rights in the classroom had not been infringed upon."[85]

If Lindenwood's experience can be generalized, and I think it can, it would open the possibility that not only is tenure an exceedingly inefficient and unreliable means of securing academic freedom, it is also may be unnecessary.

CHAPTER NINE: RESEARCH VERSUS TEACHING

It is my contention that the best research and the only research that should be expected of university professors is wide and informed reading in their fields and in related fields. The best teachers are almost invariably the most widely informed, those with the greatest range of interests and the most cultivated minds. That is real research, and that, and that alone, enhances teaching.

– Page Smith[86]

Professors are expected to be both scholars and teachers. That's the simple and accepted job description that applies to virtually all faculty members at all American institutions of higher education. But when scholarship is equated with "academic research," as it is on most campuses, the dual roles of the teacher and scholar are nearly impossible to carry out equally well. Recognizing the problem of carrying water on both shoulders, colleges and universities tend to gravitate to either research or teaching, with an offsetting reduction in the other. As evidenced by the growing number of institutions that now stake their claim as "research universities," research has become the preferred emphasis. Those institutions continue to pay lip service to the importance of teaching, but they and their faculties have been drawn inexorably towards research as their *raison d'etre*. Viewed through the prism of this book, the welfare of the student, especially the undergraduate student, has too often been sacrificed by the compulsion to carry out academic research for publication, and, as argued in this chapter, Lindenwood's mission as a "teaching university" is a welcome movement in higher education.

The ascendance of the research university has been a long term movement, with its beginning generally pegged by historians of education to 1876 with the founding of Johns Hopkins University as the nation's first university emphasizing research.[87]. As a frontrunner of what would become the *modus operandi* for research institutions, Hopkins began granting PhD degrees, publishing the dissertations that were required to attain that degree, and founded a university press for the publication of the academic journals and other scholarly works produced by its faculty. The Hopkins model was followed shortly thereafter by the nation's leading universities, including the University of Chicago, the University of California, and the prestigious private schools that would later form the Ivy League. During the 20th century, especially in its latter half, the research model was increasingly adopted by colleges and universities, and today research has become the prominent, and apparently preferred, activity of university professors. Liberal arts colleges, branches of state land grant universities, commuter schools, and even former normal schools and teachers colleges have "blossomed" in recent years into research institutions of one ilk or another.

By contrast, Lindenwood University has taken the reverse direction. As part of its sweeping rejuvenation program launched in 1989, the school tilted the balance back to teaching and away from research. Quite the opposite of the great majority of other schools, professors at Lindenwood are recognized and rewarded primarily for their performance in the classroom. Research is not discouraged, but it is looked upon more favorably if it is directed into areas that will directly enhance teaching capabilities or, even better, if it is conducted with heavy student involvement and contribution. More generally, the scholarship capabilities of prospective and current Lindenwood professors are judged less on accomplishments in narrowly defined research conducted in sub-specialties, and more on a comprehensive knowledge of their teaching fields. The school's vision of scholarship and research conforms rather precisely with the statement by historian (and higher education critic) Page Smith that began this chapter.

It would be foolhardy to disparage the work and importance of the major American research universities. Those 100 or so institutions—say for argument's sake the 62 members of the American Association of Universities plus some worthy competitors—are awesome in their scope and depth and are fairly regarded as invaluable national treasures.[88] And in today's increasingly global and technology based economies, their role in maintaining American competitiveness is obvious and profound. Such universities may not be particularly hospitable to students who land on their campuses fresh out of high school, but their contributions, especially in the sciences, have obvious and immeasurable value. The argument here is simply that those institutions, representing less than 5% of U.S. colleges and universities, provide an unrealistic and inappropriate model for most of the remaining 95% of schools.

But a sad fact of higher education today is that the research model continues to grow without apparent justification, and the majority of the country's college professors take the view—correctly it turns out—that research, rather than teaching, is the royal road to academic advancement. Yet with all the research going on at all the schools, one is hard pressed to point to commensurate breakthroughs of any import in the academic disciplines they serve, much less society at large. What passes for research at the lesser schools—and, in fairness, some of what is generated by the more prestigious schools—is often trivial, conducted with questionable methodology, and written in jargon that makes it nearly incomprehensible. That the intellectual energies of a vast pool of professors have been diverted to pedestrian research and away from meaningful teaching is one of the great tragedies of American education.

A Personal View of Research

My path to a career in higher education was much more delayed and elongated than most, and in the process I developed a view towards academic research that is probably more skeptical than most. While enrolled in the

MBA program at Wharton, I taught part-time at the Philadelphia Community College and then, after receiving the degree and entering the business world, I again taught part-time as an adjunct instructor at St. Louis University. I found the teaching experience highly satisfying and began work on a PhD at SLU with the idea that teaching could eventually be a rewarding second career and that a doctorate seemed to be the required license to practice. I completed the necessary course and comprehensive examinations on time but, with business and family demands taking precedence, spent some ten years in the academic nether land of "ABD"—work for the doctorate completed, "all but dissertation."

During that time I formed two personal views of academic research: that the process depends more on dogged determination than on creativity and that the end product is often of little consequence. The dissertation that I eventually completed dealt with the way common stocks were priced at their initial public offering and the changes in their market prices in the immediate aftermarket. In particular, my study was meant to determine whether the price movements of those stocks conformed with what one would expect based on some of the unifying concepts of academic finance. After thousands of hours collecting data, entering them into punch cards for computer processing (the work took place a long time ago), and analyzing the results, I concluded that it did. Following that "discovery," I reviewed the relevant academic literature on the subject and summed up my conclusions in a somewhat dry dissertation, which, I expect, has only gathered dust on the shelves of the St. Louis University library for the last twenty years or so. The work was not particularly groundbreaking, but it got me over the ABD hurdle and awarded my license to practice as a professor.

In the years I was both a businessman and a part-time professor, I considered reversing roles and going into teaching full time. One of the considerations that dissuaded me from making that switch was the realization that success at a university (i.e. getting tenure) required satisfactory teaching skills, but, more importantly, the ability to conduct publishable research. After producing a passable dissertation, I was confident that I had the writing and quantitative skills to put together a string of journal articles. But spending the better part my days toiling away to produce articles and manuscripts on arcane topics in finance was not an attractive prospect. Based on student evaluations, I knew I was an effective teacher, but I quickly picked up on the fact that in today's academic world good teaching is not sufficient—and in some cases not even necessary—for tenured status. That was not a world I longed to enter.

My own inclinations and impressions of academic research, of course, cannot be extrapolated to all the research that universities conduct. In particular, the leading medical schools, engineering schools, and hard science departments produce superb research that results in great near term and potential benefits. And there is no denying that much of the work in the humanities and soft sciences has benefit as well. In my field of finance, a number of Nobel Prizes have been awarded for work that has explained and continues to transform the financial markets.

But with the faculties of hundreds of lesser-known universities jumping into research in recent years, there may be too much research chasing too few good ideas. Using finance as an example, the legitimately good ideas from universities usually find their way to the *Journal of Finance,* the preeminent publication in academic finance. The work that is published in that journal is carefully refereed for scholarship and relevance, and fewer than one in ten manuscripts submitted for publication is found acceptable by the standards of its editors.

And the manuscripts selected tend to emanate from finance professors at a rather small group of institutions. As a confirming exercise, I reviewed the summary data compiled by the editors of the *Journal of Finance* for the years 2004 and 2005, including information on the affiliation of authors whose articles were selected for publication. Of the nearly 200 articles published by professors from U.S. colleges and universities, the overwhelming majority were written by professors from the previously cited 62 prominent research universities making up the Association of American Universities. Specifically, 87% of the contributors were associated with AAU schools, with the remaining 13% associated with another U.S. institution of higher education.[89]

At the same time, according to the Prentice Hall Finance Faculty Directory, there are at least 5,000 professors of finance at some 700 universities in the U.S.[90] Since virtually all of them have achieved tenure, or are seeking it, by publishing scholarly articles, the question might come to mind regarding where all of those articles wind up being published. The answer, unfortunately, is in a large number of lesser journals that seem to have sprung up to provide an outlet for finance professors in need of a place to publish. There is no way to determine the actual readership of those journals, but it is likely infinitesimal. While the *Journal of Finance* is usually found in the library of any university with a business school, the other finance journals are rarely available. But regardless of the circulation and number of readers, hundreds of finance professors need a place to send manuscripts that are not up to *Journal of Finance* standards. And since tenure committees count the number of articles published as much as review them for quality, the newly formed presses serve as an important purpose for tenure seeking faculty.

In some cases the new journals are simply second rate, publishing the results of research that may have been rejected by the *Journal of Finance* or similarly prestigious journals. In other cases, they are highly specialized versions of the *Journal of Finance,* concentrating on fields such as portfolio theory, quantitative methods of finance, and managerial finance. And as the focus of these journals narrows, so does the readership, to the point where a very small, very specialized group of university professors tend to be constantly writing to themselves on obscure subjects—and, one suspects, for the sole purpose of establishing a suitably long list of publications for a tenure committee. In remarking on the proliferation of academic journals generally, the co-authors of *Remaking the University* (all three of whom are in senior positions at major research universities) suggest that "[i]n a world ruled by 'publish or perish,' what perishes first, it turns out, are trees and library budgets. Breaking this logjam requires disentangling or 'decoupling' the processes of faculty evaluation and print publication."[91]

How did it happen that such a vast amount of professorial time and effort has been diverted from teaching and towards producing articles with little purpose beyond padding one's curriculum vitae? The justification for such outpouring of faculty research tends to be based on two arguments: The first argument runs along the lines that even if research is not of the ground breaking variety, it nevertheless has value if it pushes forward the boundaries of knowledge, no matter how slight the push. The second argument for research is that by undertaking original work, professors improve the mastery of their fields, giving them "presence" in the classroom and turning them into more effective teachers. Each of these arguments needs a closer review.

Dubious Argument#1 for Unlimited Research: The Creation of Knowledge

At the risk of overly personalizing the subject—and the greater risk of generalizing the conclusions—I continue briefly on my own brush with academic research. The theoretical underpinning of my dissertation was something called the "efficient market hypothesis." The EMH is a very important, yet commonsensical concept in finance. At its essence, the EMH states simply that with open markets and freely available information, investors get what they pay for. Securities tend to be priced correctly as the many profit maximizing individual and institutional investors make their decisions to buy and sell securities in light of information germane to their value. And for that reason, it is difficult for anyone to outperform the market, short of being lucky or having privileged information not available to the general investing public. The EMH has been tested exhaustively and its validity has not suffered any serious challenge—despite the fact that the livelihood of many stockbrokers, mutual fund managers, investment advisory firms, and other market participants is based on "beating the market."

The importance of the EMH is undeniable and a search for scholarly research on the subject will yield thousands of articles, beginning with the seminal work conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, much of it at the University of Chicago. A good portion of the research on the EMH that has followed—certainly including mine—has been undertaken with a modest goal to "fill in the gaps." Research has been conducted into every conceivable financial market to determine whether efficiency exists, with the invariable and unsurprising conclusion that it does, absent an "anomaly" such as unequal market access or trading based on inside information. The EMH research has even been extended beyond financial markets to test whether, for instance, the odds posted at race tracks or the "lines" established for sporting events are, on average, accurate. It turns out, again unsurprisingly, that those odds and lines are "efficient," a result to be expected if lots of informed people are placing their money at risk. At least on this subject, one must wonder whether research is in fact filling in the gaps—or just creating gaps to fill in.

While the research is interesting to someone with a bent towards finance and mathematics, its usefulness is quite another matter. Over and over, the efficient market hypothesis is validated with yet new studies dealing with different markets. It would be as if academic physicists continually devised experiments (and perhaps they do) to confirm the laws of thermodynamics, testing under various conditions of pressure, temperature, etc. how energy will be conserved. I suspect there are few holes to be closed in our understanding of thermodynamics and there is no need for confirming research. But in finance, at least in my opinion, the studies continue to pile up, offering little beyond adding to a finance professor's publication list.

My harsh opinion on the value of much of the research in finance stems form a practical view of its usefulness. Academic purists may disagree, but I believe the test of academic research is its ultimate application beyond the university. In the case of finance, the question centers on what is actually being transferred from the realm of scholarly journals to the business world. The intermediate step in that transference would logically be the college textbook, but the content of the books that are commonly selected today by finance professors for undergraduate and MBA courses has changed little in the decades since I was a student. Certainly the texts have been updated for the subsequent dynamic changes in the financial markets, but those updates are mainly descriptive and do not depend on rigorous research. With respect to the theoretical foundations of finance, remarkably little has changed. In particular, the explanations of the efficient market hypothesis are virtually identical to those from the 1960s. The examples have been updated, but not the underlying rationale for how and why markets work the way they do.

So who, outside of the academy, uses all of the new "findings" published in all of the finance oriented academic journals? My slightly guarded answer is no one. Traders on the desks of the major Wall Street firms and managers of today's mammoth hedge funds could conceivably find the research helpful when they are making their multi-million dollar bets on short-term market behavior.* But in the nearly thirty years I spent in the investment banking business, including fairly extensive contact with chief financial officers and with professionals in virtually every area of banking and investments, I never once heard anyone refer to, cite from, or even acknowledge the existence of a single academic journal.

And within the academy, the readership of most academic research is tiny, consisting of tenure committees that assess a candidate's suitability based on the outflow of publications produced and a small cohort of fellow researchers on other campuses who share common research interests. In other words, academic research is a rather incestuous activity, without much value beyond the in-group—but of critical importance to the young professor seeking tenure.

It may be surprising to many—perhaps inside as well as outside the academy—that the research mentality is increasingly taking hold in business education, one of the most practical of all areas of higher education. But the research that is produced by finance professors and commented on above is produced in parallel by professors of management, marketing, and the other disciplines under a business school's umbrella. And, as in the other schools of the university, the research appears to be much more inwardly focused (i.e. for tenure and for highly specialized audiences), than outwardly focused (i.e. for students and the business world generally). In a recent article in *The Harvard Business Review* (a non-technical publication written for a wide business audience), the

* Even if that's the case, one wonders about the appropriateness of a college professor enriching market speculators who, presumably, would have the wherewithal to commission the research from their own resources.

authors bemoan the trend of academic research in the business schools and its deleterious effect on instruction:

> ...a management professor who publishes rigorously executed studies in the highly quantitative *Administrative Science Quarterly* is considered a star, while an academic whose articles appear in the accessible pages of a professional review—which is much more likely to influence business practices—risks being denied tenure. We know of no scholar at a first-rate business school with a good publishing record who has been denied tenure or promotion for being a poor teacher...But we do know of a professor of finance who was denied promotion when his department decided he was not a serious scholar. The damning evidence against him included seven articles in this publication [*The Harvard Business Review*] and the highest teaching ratings in his department. In short, the stated end of business education may remain the same: to educate practitioners and to create knowledge through research. But the means make that end impossible to achieve because rewards are directed elsewhere.[92]

While I was in the business world and my connection to academia was as an adjunct professor, I labored mightily during my free time on a few articles that were ultimately published in "refereed" journals. As a result of my time and effort, I received a grand total of one direct response, that in the form of a letter in the following issue. By any measure, my work was not of great import, but, based on many conversations with academic colleagues, my articles have much company in the black hole of academic research into which they fell. Informally, academics generally estimate that, regardless of the discipline, only 5% to 10% of published research can be termed significant.[93] The remainder is undertaken merely to fulfill employment requirements—that is, tenure, promotion, and prestige.

Though I can only speak with limited authority on research in finance, it appears that in the subjects crucial to the development of the undergraduate's intellect—literature, history, philosophy, economics, and other social sciences—much of what passes for research is also far from scholarly. Rather than being innovative and consequential, it is more often abstract and dull. Especially stultifying is the growing emphasis on quantification at the expense of insight as reflected in social science journal articles that are a blur of statistics and mathematical formulas. In what is sometimes referred to as "physics envy," fields that are not naturally susceptible to the scientific method of inquiry are nevertheless pushed in that direction because it is easier to compile data and crunch data than it is to produce works that are relevant, interesting, and original.

In discussing such trends and academic folly, Lucas calls much of what passes for research as "scholarship at gunpoint." He describes the plight of professors caught up in the publish or perish environment of today's world of higher education as follows:

> Co-opted, forced into becoming accomplices to a system that obliges them to engage in activities for which they have little liking or aptitude, to seek funding for and to conduct studies few others besides their close circle of peers and professional colleagues are apt to read or consult, and to write even when they have little to say, faculty members themselves will sometimes admit the whole enterprise has become an absurdly inflated boondoggle, an undertaking of dubious worth,

> carried on in many cases at public expense and without much utility, cultural or intellectual.[94]

The Dubious Argument#2 for Unlimited Research: Making Better Teachers

The advocates of the research model invariably bring forth the logical sounding argument that, by conducting scholarly research, professors develop a deep knowledge of their subject area and that mastery makes them better teachers.* The contention that research enhances good teaching enjoys almost universal support in academia. A typical endorsement of that contention is offered by English professor Paula Krebs: "Of course there's a trickle-down effect when faculty members attend conferences in their field and pursue research. We teach better when we are up to date in our disciplines, introducing the latest ideas and reading into our courses and helping our students to understand themselves and their teachers as members of a disciplinary community beyond the campus, one with its own standards and expectations."[95]

William Massy, a Professor Emeritus at Stanford University who writes extensively about higher education, agrees—to a point. He believes the quality of education increases for a while as "research intensity" (i.e. the amount of time a professor spends in research activities) increases. In that respect, research and teaching are, in the economist's words, "complementary goods." But as the research intensity increases, Massy maintains that teaching and research become "substitute goods" with one squeezing out the other, and there is little doubt that it is usually teaching that gets squeezed out. Massy maintains that after some optimal point of the research-teaching balance, "research intensity actually reduces education quality."[96] He further makes the general assertion that with the long term, persistent shift of faculty resources towards research, the quality of teaching has suffered.

Massy calls the steady and inexorable trend of faculty time and energy towards research—at liberal arts colleges and comprehensive universities as well as

* The irony is that the more eminent the researcher, the lighter the teaching load. Many of the most highly acclaimed research professors never set foot in a classroom, at least not one filled with undergraduates.

at research universities— "the academic ratchet." He maintains that the ratchet is in place throughout higher education and that it ultimately undermines the effectiveness of undergraduate education:

> The ratchet's steady, irreversible shift of faculty effort toward research and scholarship is occurring at all kinds of four-year institutions, not just at doctorate-granting schools. At best this inhibits the improvement of core educational competency; at worst it represents a corrosive force.[97]

Other researchers have looked directly at the counterclaim that research in fact promotes good teaching. Patrick Terenzini and Ernest Pascarella, best known for their encyclopedic *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research,* scoured the available literature on the general subject of the effect of college on students and identified several "myths," including the myth that good researchers are also good teachers. The authors acknowledged that there are certainly faculty members who are both noted, cutting-edge scholars and extraordinary teachers, and anecdotes abound about individuals who can electrify a classroom based on their research. But the authors attempted to get beyond anecdotes and, specifically, to determine whether the available evidence supported the "good researcher=good teacher" argument in today's colleges and universities. They conclude:

> The systematic evidence, and it is a large and consistent body of research, calls the "good researcher good teacher" argument sharply into question. Our best estimate from this body of evidence is that the correlation between scholarly productivity and ratings of undergraduate instruction (on those dimensions closely related

> to student achievement) ranges from .10 to .16. Put another way, scholarly productivity accounts for between 1 and 2.5% of the differences in undergraduate teaching effectiveness— between 97 and 99% of the differences in teaching effectiveness are due to things other than scholarly productivity (Feldman, 1987)[98]. Although such a trend in the research does not support the claim that doing research detracts from being an effective teacher, it certainly calls into question the academic shibboleth that scholarly or research productivity is a required skill for effective undergraduate teaching. Indeed it may well be that effectiveness in these two central dimensions of academic life is largely independent of each other.[99]

Terenzini and Pascarella speak with few qualifications about the dangers to effective classroom instruction by failing to dispel the good-researcher=good-teacher myth:

> So long as the myth that research and teaching are closely and positively related persists, promotion and tenure decisions will continue to be made on the presumption that an institution can have the best of both worlds by allowing research productivity to dominate the faculty reward structure. Why bother to scrutinize both the teaching and research abilities of candidates for appointment, promotion, and tenure if looking mostly at the one will do? Find and reward good researchers, the logic goes, and chances are high

> you'll find and reward a good teacher... Until the good-researcher = good-teacher myth is put to rest, however, the research on effective teaching methods will continue to be ignored, reward structures will continue to go unexamined, good researchers will be excused for marginally competent teaching, and good teachers who do not publish will continue to be denied tenure. As for undergraduate instruction, it will be business as usual...Somehow, as college and university faculty and academic administrators, we must get beyond the smoke of this long-standing myth and turn our energies to what really makes a difference in helping students learn.[100]

Teaching v. Research: Why It's No Contest

The "unexamined reward systems" that Terenzini and Pascarella refer to are those that tip the scale towards research and away from teaching. Professors, like anyone else, respond to incentives, and the prestige-seeking university has provided a set of faculty incentives and rewards for research that simply overwhelm those associated with teaching. Tenure is the most obvious and meaningful carrot extended to professors, but there are others. By way of illustration, Massy has set forth a list of "drivers," those factors that influence the research v. teaching decision:

Research

- Intellectually challenging work
- The joy of discovery
- Travel and working with colleagues

- Outputs that can be peer reviewed provide the basis for internal rewards and external market value
- Money and perquisites that come with grants

Teaching

- Working with students, shaping young minds
- Avoidance of poor teaching ratings and student problems and complaints
- The occasional teaching award[101]

For most academics reviewing those lists, the rewards of research far outweigh those of teaching. And in the case of young, untenured faculty members, the decks are stacked even more heavily towards research since, perversely, teaching awards and good ratings from students may be *harmful* to achieving tenure. Massy points out that in his survey of faculty members "[s]ome respondents characterized teaching awards as 'the kiss of death' for assistant professors: The correlation with gaining tenure is negative, perhaps because the winners put so much time into their teaching."[102]

The Impact on Undergraduate Education

The only resource professors have to offer is their time, and if the rewards of research trump those of teaching, it is obvious that the time squeeze affects good teaching. On most campuses nowadays, that fact of life puts professors and their students in a direct conflict. What undergraduate students want and need are small classes taught by full-time professors. But in order to preserve the professor's time for research—as well as for other research-related activities such as off-campus conferences and sabbatical leaves—what they get instead are impersonal lectures delivered in auditoriums to hundreds of students at a time. Smaller classes are relegated to less qualified graduate assistants and adjunct professors. What undergraduates want and need, especially in their major field of study, is one-on-one time with professors who can advise them on both academic and career matters. What they get instead are student tutors and staff counselors, well-meaning but without the background or experience to properly guide them.

What undergraduates want (or at least need) is an honest assessment from their professors regarding their mastery of the subject. What they get instead is an artificially high grade. Students generally have a fairly accurate opinion of how well they performed in a class. If their grade is less than their opinion of what they deserve, they might reasonably ask the professor to review the factors that led to the shortfall from expectations. Such a review can be enlightening and educational for the student, but a big user of the professor's time. It involves a face-to-face meeting to go over particular examinations, term papers, or projects. The whole matter can be finessed by the professor by giving the student a higher than warranted grade, thus avoiding such reviews altogether. That practice, of course, has lead to the well- documented grade inflation that has become a fixture on today's campuses.

What undergraduates need, and what all colleges and universities at least give lip service to, is a well-designed general liberal arts education that advances their competencies and conversancies over a broad rage of subjects. Research professors, however, have the opposite orientation, being drawn to narrow sub-specialties in their discipline. They usually have little interest or time to prepare and teach survey courses, preferring instead to offer a course they can quickly cobble together within their narrow academic focus. That lack of interest naturally results in a host of specialized elective courses, to the neglect of critical survey courses and the de-emphasis on, if not disintegration of, general education discussed in an earlier chapter.

What undergraduates and their tuition-paying parents need is an education that has a sensible cost-to-value relationship. But with professors spending upwards of half their time on research—most of which is unfunded and perhaps unfounded—the cost of instruction becomes proportionately higher. The time spent away from the classroom preparing papers for a close cohort of readers can add up to academic dead time, and supporting such research becomes a major drag on the finances of the university. Students, of course, bear a share of that financial drag. Page Smith, the distinguished academic whose quote began this chapter, provides an apt quote for its conclusion:

> Make no mistake about it, the public, in the form of parents and taxpayers, bears the very considerable cost of so-called research scholarship especially in the humanities and social sciences. In my equation, every dollar that can be charged, directly or indirectly, to research represents an equivalent charge on the cost of instruction...If we could find a more rational and humane way to make decisions about the retention and promotion of faculty than by extracting publications from them, we could begin to solve a host of problems plaguing higher education.[103]

CHAPTER TEN: LIFE AT A TEACHING UNIVERSITY

Lindenwood is blessed with what is arguably one of the hardest working and dedicated teaching faculties in American higher education... While we can (and we do elsewhere in this report) raise questions as to the appropriateness of this level of workload, there can be no question as to the faculty's commitment to students, to teaching, and, most importantly, to learning.

– Report of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, Higher Learning Commission, 2003

When I was in the early years of a second career in teaching, my former colleagues from the business world often asked me about the transition from working in the "real world" to the life of a professor. If they asked how I spend my time, I explained that, like the great majority of Lindenwood professors, I was in the classroom about 15 hours each week, teaching five separate classes of between 25 and 35 students. If they showed any interest beyond that (and usually they didn't), I further explained that, since Lindenwood doesn't believe in the large lecture hall approach to learning, some of my classes were conducted in multiple sections. As a result, I taught the same course two or three times a week to a different group of students. In teacher jargon, that meant I had fewer "preps"—course preparations—than classes taught. Most semesters I, like many of my colleagues, had three preps and five classes.

My friends' reactions to this description were most often waggish. "It must beat working" was the typical response. That kind of response reflects their benign misconception that, since teaching is a second career for me, it also must be a form of semi-retirement. And while teaching may be less stressful than my former career—in no small part because it is so psychically rewarding—I try to disabuse them of their retirement notion. Along with the classroom work there are papers and tests to grade, advising responsibilities, "preps" and some administrative chores. It's a full-time job.

More generally, however, their reaction to a "mere" fifteen hours in the classroom per week reflects the general public's view that professors enjoy a professional life of relative ease, free from the competitive challenges and occupational stress facing most people outside of the ivory tower. And there is a kernel of truth in that view. College teaching, though not terribly remunerative, is highly satisfying and at the same time affords lots of individual privileges and flexibility. Aside from those fifteen hours in class, much of the remainder of one's schedule is of his or her own making.

But the reaction from those inside education to the Lindenwood fifteen hours per week, five course per semester teaching load is remarkably different.* Professors at most other schools, used to teaching two to three, and, at the very most, four classes per semester, are genuinely horror-struck at the thought of spending over ten hours per week in the classroom. Their reaction to teaching five courses per semester is often a shake of the head, which I interpret as an expression of sympathy for Lindenwood's professors, whom they must view as toiling in an academic sweatshop.

This critical view of a five-course semester is mirrored by official academia. In 2005, the Higher Learning Commission, the agency that accredits colleges and universities, awarded Lindenwood its maximum ten-year full accreditation,

* Of course "those inside education" refers to those inside *higher* education. Teachers at elementary and secondary schools typically spend twice as much time in the classroom as the Lindenwood professor.

but expressed a major concern about how hard the faculty works. In their summary report, the HLC gave the faculty a compliment of sorts for hard work and dedication: "Lindenwood is blessed with what is arguably one of the hardest working and dedicated faculties in American higher education." Yet the HLC also stated in its report that the workload "bespeaks a profoundly limited understanding of the nature of higher education, teaching and learning."[104]

The Professor's Job: Changing Views

So what accounts for the perception in higher education that a five-course semester is an unreasonable burden and that Lindenwood professors are worked unmercifully? I know many Lindenwood professors who, by choice or chance, become saddled with special projects and responsibilities, and I know many who routinely take a substantial amount of work home to stay abreast of their duties. But the normal workweek for the great majority of the faculty seems closer to the standard 40 hours—a number that most professionals outside higher education rarely get by on nowadays—and the relatively low turnover of professors from year to year would seem to belie any great occupational hardship.*

Rather than any real assessment of hours put into the job, I believe that the critical view of the workload of the Lindenwood faculty held by the HLC and other academics reflects the modern conception of a university professor's job—and, at the same time, fails to comprehend Lindenwood's teaching university model. As suggested in an earlier chapter, a large percentage of the nation's colleges and universities have succumbed to "mission creep," with academic research emerging as an institutional focus on an equal, if not superior, footing with teaching. At most colleges, professors have two roles; they are expected to undertake publishable research and they are expected to educate students. At Lindenwood, however, professors are expected to impart knowledge to students, but not necessarily to create it.

* Though I imagine it has happened, I do not personally know of anyone who resigned from the school's faculty because of the workload.

Part of the rationale for Lindenwood's single focus is the well-documented fact that organizations with a narrow focus perform more effectively, and Lindenwood has chosen the single mission of providing students with a quality education. With that mindset, the university does not require its faculty to both teach and research, for the commonsensical fact that most people are not capable of carrying out two very different jobs at the same time. Something always has to give, and, as set forth in previous chapters, what usually gives is good teaching.

Lindenwood, by resisting the trend toward academic research, more closely resembles the typical college of years past. In fact, while the 15 hours per week Lindenwood professors spend in the classroom is the exception in today's academic world, is used to be the norm. Thomas Sowell of the Hoover Institution made that point in his important and critical critique of contemporary education, *Inside American Education*:

> As increasingly vast sums of money have poured into colleges and universities over the past half-century, one of the most striking results has been that professors have taught fewer and fewer classes, and have done more and more research. When Jacques Barzun wrote his classic *Teacher in America* back in the 1940s, he referred to a typical college professor spending 15 hours a week in the classroom. Today, even half of that time would be considered an excessive teaching load at many institutions. Indeed, 35 percent of today's faculty teach undergraduates only 4 hours a week or less.[105]

It's not surprising that critics of the Lindenwood teaching model—and they include some within Lindenwood itself—argue the school is not just behind the times, but somewhat controversial, with its failure to promote academic research in favor of teaching. Part of the controversy is based on the good researcher=good teacher connection, which, as the empirical evidence cited in the previous chapter suggests, is a tenuous connection at best. Yet it remains the shared wisdom on most campuses that a good researcher is a good teacher.

Such critics argue further that beyond any teaching benefits, research is an inherently worthwhile activity, presumably having a value that is at or above that of educating undergraduates. That opinion, however, is not shared by all observers of higher education. Richard Vedder, who has published widely on higher education economics, for instance, writes in *Going Broke by Degree* that:

> Heavier teaching loads will likely mean reductions in published research. But it can be argued that the "publish or perish" atmosphere of modern times has led to a good bit of very marginal research with minimal social value. Moreover, for many, heavier teaching loads will simply mean that professors will work harder. While I know many workaholics who spend, say, 250 hours a year teaching, 500 hours preparing for class and advising students, 1,000 hours doing research, and 400 hours in committee work and other university functions, for a total of 2,150 hours a year, I know about as many who teach 250 hours, spend 250 hours on other instructional duties, 400 hours doing minimal research, and 100 hours on campus activities, for a total of 1,000 hours—25 hours a week for forty weeks a year. Heavier teaching loads for these faculty members would merely cut into time they now

> use to play golf, do leisurely reading, or perhaps engage in lucrative private consulting.[106]

The question of where professors should best spend their time can be quantified as in the above passage, but the effect on the student is both quantitative *and* qualitative. That's because at most universities, particularly the large public universities, the lecture format has become a vehicle of necessity when professors double as researchers and teachers. In order to free up more time for research, yet hold classes for a given number of students, the number of students per class rises. As a result, in the first few years of college, many students are exposed to their professors only in a lecture hall format, with the number of students in class being roughly proportional to the stature of the professor. Freshmen and sophomores can expect to hear from full professors only in auditorium style settings with hundreds of their fellow students in attendance—or, as the semester progresses, *not* in attendance when it becomes apparent that borrowing notes or just reading the book will suffice. When they are upperclassmen, their chances of closer contact with professors—at least the younger, less experienced ones—improves. But even then, getting professorial attention, in competition with conflicting research and tenure pressures, is not an easy task.

Murray Sperber, a prominent critic of the trends in undergraduate education, recounts his own experience:

> In surveying my academic journey, I am struck by the fact that, as a first-year student at Purdue, I took freshmen English in a class of fifteen students, taught by a full faculty member; whereas at Indiana, I now teach freshmen English in classes of 150 students each, and I cannot begin to help students acquire the reading and writing skills offered to me and my Purdue classmates. (Both Purdue and Indiana are typical, large

> public universities, very representative of similar institutions across the country.) [107]

Massy describes the devaluation of teaching that has come about as a result of increased class sizes to accommodate professors' needs to spend more time on their research projects. He and his colleagues at the National Center for Postsecondary Education (NCPI) conducted interviews with 378 faculty members at a variety of schools and he cites the following, presumably representative, interview transcripts:

> Yes class sizes have increased a lot. We have eliminated all undergraduate seminars. We have a couple of optional lab classes, but those are the only small classes we have left. Our average undergraduate class size last fall was 125. I go over and over this and nobody disputes the numbers. What about educational quality? Crummy. Let me back up. It's not all crummy. We have some wonderful teachers. But how much can you do with that kind of class size...When I first came here, a lot more classes had papers and essay exams and people have just had to eliminate, eliminate, eliminate because how can we possibly do all this. So there are many more classes with multiple-choice exams and very little writing. (Professor, psychology, research university)

> Class sizes have increased dramatically. In this department, we've managed to keep upper division class sizes somewhat manageable. They've increased but I'd say by about 25% to 30%. But the lower division classes, the introductory

> classes have in some cases doubled or tripled in size. And now we have classes that are over 100, close to 200 in some cases...Well, it's hard to argue that a class with 150 or 175 is as good as a class with 50 or 75. (Professor, philosophy, doctoral granting institution)[108]

Increasing the class size is not the only way universities free up faculty for research endeavors. Many use adjunct instructors, in essence substitute teachers, to conduct classes. "Adjuncts" do not enjoy faculty tenure or appointment, but they are deemed to have sufficient familiarly with the subject matter to fill in for one or more of the school's full time professors. From an economic standpoint they provide an attractive solution for the university, since adjunct instructors work at just a fraction of the allocated cost of a regularly employed professor. As a result, at schools with a significant research mission, adjunct instructors wind up teaching an increasing share of courses. Between 1970 and 1995 their numbers nearly doubled, growing from 22% of the faculty on U.S. campuses to 41%.* On average, adjunct professors teach two courses per enrollment period at the institution they are employed by.[109]

In many fields, and in particular in business and other areas of applied education, adjunct professors can be highly effective. The businessperson who brings current practices and extensive firsthand experience to the classroom acts as a good balance to the theory students get from their courses in an MBA program. But in most undergraduate courses, particularly in the liberal arts, a part time instructor rarely comes with top-notch academic credentials. Of equal importance, because of their part-time and temporary status, they are not likely

* It is unlikely that incoming students and their parents expect that the university will be contracting out close to half of its instruction to temporary workers not listed in the university's catalog, presenting a truth- in- advertising issue that has not been widely discussed in higher education.

to develop the broader relationship with the student as an advisor and mentor that can be of great importance in the undergraduate experience.

Charles Sykes, in his best selling *ProfScam*, points out the Catch 22-like irony involved in the growing use of adjunct professors at research universities:

> The academic establishment insists that only professors who do research can be good teachers, so they need to spend most of their time outside of the classroom; and because they are off researching (to become better teachers), they are replaced by part-timers or temporaries who may do little or no research at all. Academia has an almost infinite capacity for ignoring such contradictions, especially when the payoff is so high.[110]

The Benefits of Student Focus

In its undergraduate courses, Lindenwood uses few adjunct instructors. When enrollment in a course unexpectedly goes beyond its limit, an adjunct instructor may be brought in to meet the excess demand by the opening of a new section for the course. Similarly, if a full-time professor becomes ill or requires a leave of absence for an emergency, someone outside the full-time faculty may be employed. Unlike other schools, however, adjunct instructors are not used as a matter of policy.

Neither has Lindenwood increased the size of its classes to the auditorium level. In my own teaching experience, my classes have ranged in size between six and 35, with the average probably closer to the top end of that range. A quick scan of the enrollment data for the university's Fall 2006 undergraduate courses revealed a number of courses with headcounts in the 40s, but in general the course limit is set at 30 or 35 students.* Overall, the average class size at Lindenwood is 27 students.[111]

With the relatively small class sizes at Lindenwood, professors have no excuse for committing the sin of lecturing. Yet at some class size—probably over 50 students and certainly over 100—the professor, no matter how conscientious, inevitably abandons any thought of conducting a class based on discussion, individual attention, and interaction. There are just too many names to remember and not enough time. So, faced with a sea of faces, he or she usually settles into one-way delivery of the material for the day, handling the occasional question in a town hall like format.

But when class sizes are small, professors have the opportunity to foster real learning. In a sixteen-week semester they should know each student by name, and early on develop an idea about which students are struggling and which are excelling. The strugglers can be spotted easily and in most cases rescued from failure. Those doing well can also be identified and the professor can open new vistas in their education and push them as far as they are willing to go.

In his *Teacher in America,* Jacques Barzun eloquently contrasts the difference in skill and energy needed to conduct a student-centered class with that needed to simply lecture:

> Now it is relatively easy to impose a pattern on a lecture; the scheme of it can be written out beforehand and even memorized, because no one will interfere with it. But in a discussion, every one of twenty-five to thirty [students] has a right to shove the tiller in any direction he pleases. Since there must be an atmosphere of freedom, the instructor must not act like a prig-

* With Lindenwood's rapid growth, the average number of students per class has grown accordingly. As a practical matter, the class size is limited by the capacity of the classrooms and the university has only a limited number of rooms that will accommodate more that 30 or 40 students, and, as I understand it, has no plans to construct larger rooms. Hopefully the physical limitations, along with the administration's student centered mission, will limit any significant further growth in class size in the future.

> gish moderator with a gavel. He must be willing to go up sidetracks and come back. His imagination must swarm with connecting links, factual illustrations, answers to unexpected questions. He must moreover know how to correct without wounding, contradict without discouraging, coax without coddling.[112]

But the extra effort entailed to fully engage and monitor the student seems worth the effort. Terenzini and Pascarella cite a study showing that:

> ...teachers in the typical classroom spent about 80 percent of their time lecturing to students who were attentive to what was being said about 50 percent of the time. The evidence we reviewed is clear that the lecture/discussion mode of instruction is not ineffective (indeed, we estimate average freshman-senior gains of 20-35 percentile points across a range of content and academic/cognitive skill areas). But the evidence is equally clear that these conventional methods are not as effective as some other, far less frequently used methods [that] emphasize small, modularized units of content, student mastery of one unit before moving to the next, immediate and frequent feedback to students on their progress, and active student involvement in the learning process.[113]

Smaller sized classes do not ensure superior student learning, they just make it possible. If professors want to take the easy way out, they can use the lecture format regardless of the number of students before them. Beyond the initial preparation of lecture notes and the inevitable power point presentation, that form of "teaching" takes surprisingly little effort. From semester to semester it's just a matter dusting off one's notes from the prior semester and giving the same presentation to a new group of anonymous faces. But in so doing the professor is squandering an important opportunity to make an important difference in his students' education.*

Advising is another area in which professors can, and should, make a difference in their students' education and lives. In his insightful book on undergraduates and their views of college life, *Making the Most of College,* Harvard professor Richard Light cited that in his ten years of research on some 90 college campuses, the major unfilled need cited by both students and faculty was that of quality, one-on-one advising.[114] At the same time, the students he interviewed who had been fortunate enough to enjoy focused advice from their professors invariably credited that advice as among the most beneficial aspects of their college career. Professors who took the time to listen, ask probing questions, and set forth challenges had profound and lasting effects on their students, not just on academic matters but on career and life choices.**

Light notes that the faculty's advisory role varies greatly by type of institution and "resource constraints." I suspect, however, that it's not so much resource constraint as it is resource focus, and the nature and extent of one-on-one student advising may present the most stark contrast between the research university and the teaching university. At a pure form research university, faculty advisory duties are focused, if not exclusively then nearly so, on the graduate student. Providing guidance to the doctoral and post-doctoral students on

* No doubt a number of Lindenwood professors lecture rather than use the small class sizes more effectively. But to the extent they do take the time and energy needed to engage the student, the HLC and other academics who view 15 hours per week in the classroom as an unspeakable hardship may be *underestimating* the work intensity of the Lindenwood professor.

** Professor Light's findings were so powerful on him that he now attempts to broaden his own advisees' faculty contacts by giving each an assignment: "Your job is to get to know at least one professor reasonably well this year, and to have that faculty member get to know you reasonably well." Light has found that the effort to create those relationships, a healthy form of academic networking, pays major dividends. On the other side of the desk, professors who take the time to provide quality individual advice can have a profoundly positive effect on their students. As commendable and no doubt effective as his efforts may be, it seems a little peculiar to me that the initiative for advising comes solely from the student.

their research projects consumes most of their direct time with students. At the research university the out-of-class needs of the student are more often relegated to the dean of students and administrative staffs than to the faculty who may consider dealing less formally with undergraduates as coddling them.*

At the other end of the pole sits a teaching university such as Lindenwood where student-advisees are nearly all undergraduates and where the content of the advice is broader than just academic. Like all Lindenwood professors, I set aside at least ten hours per week for student focused "office hours," with most of that time devoted to providing some extra assistance for students who are attending my classes or to working with a fairly long list of student-advisees in their course planning. But over the years I, like most of my colleagues, have attempted to broaden the approach. After my advisee and I finish a perfunctory job such as designing the next semester's a schedule, I ask a few open-ended questions meant to breakdown the formality of the meeting and go beyond its immediate goals. Depending on the student, the questions may be perfunctory ("Any reason you won't graduate on time?"), probing ("Do you have any second thoughts about your major?"), or speculative ("What do you think you'll be doing a few years from now?"). Lindenwood's campus, like most campuses in the twenty-first century, is populated by an increasingly diverse student

* When professors are relieved of the job of providing academic and career advice to student, universities "solve" the problem by establishing a separate professional staff to provide such advice and counseling. The counselors and advisers may have somewhat lower salary requirements than the professor, but with a large "case load" of students and no first hand knowledge of them through the classroom, the quality of their counsel and advice tends to be inferior to that which could be delivered directly by a conscientious professor. Moreover, the professional counselors, though lower paid, may wind up costing more. They are housed in separate facilities and, though they are part of the support staff themselves, they inevitably require their *own* cadre of assistants, secretaries, computer staffs, and the like. And the chances are great that they will push for an expansion of their role and function. In *Remaking the University*, the authors note that "the advising function itself came to require more and better computer support, greater flexibility of hours, and a broader range of services, including career placement, tutoring, and counseling. Where advising had once been subsumed within the faculty role, it became instead an enterprise in itself with its own impulse for expansion."

body—traditional and non-traditional students; students with different levels of academic preparation; and students from a wide variety of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds—and for that reason the latter part of those sessions often veer off into unexpected directions. In any case, those directions usually lead to interesting conversations that, hopefully, foster more closely examined academic, career, and life decisions.

Between teaching five classes per semester, advising upwards of a hundred or so students and handling the ancillary student centered work that comes with being a Lindenwood professor, there is precious little time for academic research. And for that reason it's entirely reasonable to ask how the school's faculty members remain on top of their field. After all, to be a professor, one must have something to profess.

Those of us dedicated to education respond to that important questions by maintaining that "the only research that matters" (paraphrasing Page Smith) is that which serves to enhance undergraduate teaching—mainly reading widely and eclectically in one's field for the purpose of enlivening classroom presentations and engaging student interest. The focus of the research university couldn't be more different, where the favored work product of research is a highly specialized, narrowly conducted project whose primary beneficiary is not the student, but rather the professor who originated and led the project.

By contrast and by example, I consider productive research in my field of finance to be reading popular publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *The Harvard Business Review*, and *Business Week*, and selectively reading articles in the academic journals such as the *Journal of Finance*. While I read I make notes and copies of relevant material for classroom use or for a supplemental student handout. I expect my counterparts at most universities are reading for the purpose of enhancing and expanding their own research. I also review new and existing textbooks (albeit more often at the urging of publishers than my own initiative); each year supervise a thesis preparation of one or two candidates for a master's degree; and attend an occasional seminar or conference. But the total of all of my reading and ancillary activities is unlikely to add up to over one-tenth of my workday. Lindenwood's full-time faculty members have varied work habits and schedules, but I doubt that many vary greatly from me in the time they spend on scholarly pursuits—or, more importantly, in the student-focus of those pursuits.

Professors groomed on the primacy of research might find Lindenwood an inhospitable place to work. But for teachers whose professional allegiance is to the student rather than to their academic discipline, the teaching university model has great appeal. For the professor who thrives on student interaction, both in the classroom and one-on-one, it probably beats a professional life consumed by activities such as writing research grant proposals, supervising doctoral dissertations, publishing narrowly focused research to avoid "perishing," editing or refereeing articles for specialized academic journals, presenting papers at academic conferences, and evaluating the publications of colleagues up for tenure at the university. A preference for life at a teaching university depends of course on one's leanings, but in any event it is a challenging—and very much a full-time—job.

MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER ELEVEN: A MANAGED UNIVERSITY

The Teaching University does not aspire to be the bureaucratic, fragmented research university that populates the mainstream of higher education. It stands for teaching excellence and fiscal responsibility and seeks foremost to be accessible and affordable to students.

– Lindenwood University 2005 President's Report

In 1989 Lindenwood University (then Lindenwood College) had the death rattle. Enrollment was in a free fall and most of the school's 1,200 remaining students were commuters. There were a mere 230 residential students sharing the 109 acre campus. The faculty had shrunk to 40 professors, many of whom had taken part time jobs to supplement their Lindenwood salaries, which by then languished at the bottom quartile for faculty members at peer institutions. With a dwindling financial cushion—the endowment had shrunk to $600,000 and the banks showed little interest in keeping the institution afloat—the board of directors considered a proposal to sell the school's assets to another local institution for a nominal sum. The proposal failed by just one trustee vote.

Taking a decidedly different tack, the directors then empowered Dennis Spellmann, at the time a consultant to the university, to develop a new business plan and, as its new president, to undertake a "refounding" of the 162 year old institution. Based on the strength of the plan and the commitment of key directors, President Spellman was able to secure a $3,000,000 line of credit from a bank. That bank loan served as seed capital for developing a new management model for higher education, one centered on teaching, and free of many of the traditions and trappings that can get in the way of an efficient delivery of quality education.

Since that time Lindenwood has adhered to the new teaching university model—and the results have been dramatic. The university proclaims itself to be the fastest growing college or university in the State of Missouri. By 2006, the number of residential students, primarily undergraduates, climbed to over 3,400; another 1,000 or so undergraduates live off campus and commute. When graduate students and students enrolled in independent study programs are counted, the university's headcount more than doubles. The full-time faculty, including a fair number of professors from 1989, now numbers 161 and the university reports that their pay levels are above those at peer institutions.[115]

To accommodate its growth, the main campus has expanded to 500 acres in the last ten years and over $200 million of new residence and dining facilities, classrooms and athletic facilities have been added. In addition, the university operates out of a number of satellite facilities, ranging from small functional buildings for offsite instruction to a newly purchased campus in nearby Belleville, Illinois to an expansive recreated historic village devoted to American studies in Booneville, Missouri.

Financial Profile of a Teaching University

Almost as remarkable as the university's growth is the way in which that growth was financed. Unlike other schools that borrow heavily or that receive major gifts to spur their development, Lindenwood has grown primarily through internally generated funds. A few financial comparisons are illustrative. The table below gives a percentage breakdown of the sources of funds for Lindenwood's operations in 2006.[116] Alongside the breakdown are comparable percentages as compiled by Massy for U.S. private colleges in the aggregate:[117]

Sources of funds	Lindenwood	Private Colleges
Net tuition and fees	86%	55%
Gifts and endowment income	7%	36%
Other	7%	9%
Total sources of funds	100%	100%

With fully 86% of the its $84.8 million in fiscal year 2006 revenue coming from the "Net tuition and fees" category, Lindenwood is clearly tuition driven when compared to other private schools.[118] If the comparison had been extended to the larger, private research universities the difference would be even greater, since tuition and fees at those schools account for only 31% of revenues. The percentage is even lower at public colleges and universities, of course, where half or more of operating funds come from state and local appropriations and where net tuition and fees typically account for less than 20% total fund sources.[119]

Income from gifts and endowment income, which accounted for $6.3 million, or 7%, of fund sources at Lindenwood in 2006, is a highly variable amount, dependent on development campaigns and investment results, but 7% is roughly in line with prior years. A major reason for the relatively low percentage of funds from gifts and investment income is the school's relatively small endowment of $61 million. In 1989, when the university was at its nadir, the fund had been nearly depleted and the university has had a relatively short period in which to rebuild it.

The manner in which Lindenwood uses its funds provides and even more dramatic contrast with much of the rest of academia. Below is shown a percentage analysis of the aggregated uses of funds as provided by Massy for private colleges, along with Lindenwood's uses of funds for 2006:

Uses of funds	Lindenwood	Private Colleges
Instruction and unfunded research	39%	34%
Funded research	0%	3%
Funded public service	0%	3%
Administration & support services	24%	46%
Savings	37%	14%
Total uses of funds	100%	100%

The first three categories of the uses of funds shown above are related to faculty activities and student services and, if added together, Lindenwood and other schools are roughly equivalent. The amount of expenses related to funded research—that is, research undertaken through contracts with governmental or private entities—is usually a relatively small component at a private college. That doesn't mean, however, that those professors are not engaged in a significant amount of research at those colleges; it means rather that the research they are conducting is not receiving direct financial support and is paid out of the schools' resources.* Public service expenses relate to the contractual activities undertaken by the faculty and staffs of colleges and universities to perform consulting and other work for government agencies and not-for-profit groups. Publicly supported institutions tend to be more active in those endeavors. Lindenwood, in keeping with its narrowly focused teaching university mission, is not engaged in any funded research or public service.

As is clear from the tables, the largest differences between Lindenwood's use of funds and that of other schools are in the categories of administration and support services and saving. Much of the former category is made of expenses known in the business world as overhead, expenses incurred by staff employees whose work is in indirect support of the organization's mission. For reasons to

* At the larger research universities, as one would expect, the amount of expenses dedicated to funded research is significantly higher and totals approximately 19% at both private and public universities, and there are also correspondingly large revenues from grants and research contracts at those universities.

be elaborated upon shortly, Lindenwood is clearly a low overhead operation in comparison to similar schools.

The final category, savings, is the university's bottom line, the amount of funds left over after all instructional and overhead expenses have been accounted for. In the business world, savings is akin to operating income, which, after paying taxes and interest, can either be paid to shareholders or reinvested in the operation. Since Lindenwood, as a nonprofit organization, has no shareholders—and as an institutional policy has no debt on which it must pay interest—all of its operating income, or savings, is retained for the university's use and serves as the propellant for future growth.

To amplify, most of the "saved" funds find their way to the balance sheet in the form of additional assets to support the institution's growth and development.* Financial analysts, whether looking at the profit or the not-for-profit sectors, calculate a crucially important number called the "sustainable growth rate." That rate is arrived at by calculating the amount of retained income, or savings, as a percent of assets. In 2006 for instance, Lindenwood, after paying all instructional and overhead expenses, enjoyed $31 million of savings, all of which were used to increase the school's assets, resulting in assets growing from $227.3 million at the beginning of the 2006 fiscal year to $258.3 million at the end of that year. That growth rate, approximately 14 %, has allowed the university to expand its asset infrastructure—classrooms, dormitories, new technologies—to accommodate a growth in enrollment of roughly the same amount, as evidenced by a 16% increase in revenues from net tuition and fees.†

It would be coincidental, of course, for the sustainable growth rate and the actual growth rate of the institution to be exactly the same in any one year. In years marked by an aggressive development campaign and enhanced funds from

* Savings could also be used to reduce liabilities, but since Lindenwood's debt is small and transitory, the preponderance of savings is used to build up assets.

† Each year the university's auditing firm, KPMG-Peat Marwick, calculates Lindenwood's key financial ratios and compares them to some 300 peer institutions. Lindenwood's return-on-assets percentage—essentially equivalent to the sustainable growth rate calculated above—puts it well into the top quartile of colleges and universities, making Lindenwood's growth possible.

donations, the growth in assets may outpace enrollment growth; in other years, the opposite may happen. But over the long term, both the school's assets and student population have expanded at the double-digit rates made possible by the double-digit growth rates in savings.

A Low Overhead Operation in a High Overhead Business

Using composite data presented earlier in this chapter, the much higher annual savings at Lindenwood compared to other schools—37% versus 14%—explains why the university has had the wherewithal to grow at such a rapid rate and without corresponding increases in tuition and fees. And using the same data, it is obvious that a large part of the difference results from the marked difference in the use of overhead. At the typical school, 46% of all sources of funds are gobbled up by administrative and support services, whereas at Lindenwood the percentage is just 24%.

What accounts for the modest overhead? As a start, one might look at the university's uncluttered table of organization. On the instruction side there is just a single, all-purpose provost to whom seven academic deans report. Those deans are not like those at most universities, presiding over quasi-independent schools with their own layers of overhead, but rather they administer academic divisions of the university and most function with a single administrative assistant. Deans are also "player-coaches" with their own sizeable teaching loads. Within the divisions there are no departments—and therefore no department heads with attendant support requirements. Rather, each academic discipline (history, English, accounting, etc.) is administered by a professor who, in addition to normal teaching duties, acts as a "program manager." Program manager duties are rotated among faculty members with little fanfare.

The university operates "lean and mean," in stark contrast with today's academic world and a far cry from the "old Lindenwood." Before the university's restructuring in 1989 there were 369 individuals carrying out a variety of staff (i.e. non-instructional) duties in support of 40 faculty members. Today, with the university many times larger, there are approximately 185 staff members supporting 161 full-time faculty members.[120]

Anyone working in the private sector knows that a similar radical management transformation has taken place in recent decades in the business world as companies have been forced to operate in a highly focused, non-bureaucratic manner in the face of a brutally competitive global market. Middle management ranks have been thinned or eliminated and other non-essential jobs have been cut or, increasingly, outsourced. But in higher education—where students somehow manage to pay ever-escalating costs and where donors remain generous—the *modus operandus* seems little changed and Lindenwood's streamlined management style is little more than a curiosity.

If anything, institutions of higher education are becoming more bloated. In a study based on information supplied to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Office, Karen Grassmuck of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, looked at the growth of "other professionals" (i.e. non-faculty) at U.S. colleges and universities and found runaway administrative costs. Her study showed that over a ten year period, during which faculties increased by less than 6% and the student population increased by less than 10%, support staff in the form of systems analysts, counselors, research assistants, and other non-teaching professionals increased by over 60%.[121]

Richard Vedders, the previously cited Ohio University economist, also finds an unrelenting trend towards increased administrative and support expenses. He reports that in 1929, only 19 cents was spent on administrative expenses for every dollar spent on instruction. By the mid-1990s, however, that amount had grown to 48 cents on the dollar. He has also analyzed data from the National Center for Education Statistics from 1976 through 2000 and discovered that at public universities, spending for instruction rose by 21% in that period, but spending for all other purposes rose by 51%. He speculates that "[a]s incremental resources have become available to universities, administrators have reallocated more funds to themselves, providing more administrators to ease their burdens and perhaps raising their own salaries."[122] In related work, Vedders reached the unsurprising conclusion that, burdened with excessive overhead, productivity in higher education is decreasing. He disaggregated the National Center's statistics for 1976 to 2000 to arrive at an estimate of labor productivity, a measure economists calculate by looking at units of output realized for units of input. While productivity for the overall American economy had increased by 65% during the period of his study, or 1.6% per year, he estimated that productivity at U.S. colleges and universities had *dropped* by 12.5% over that 25 year period, or 0.5% per year.[123]

The Allocation of a Professor's Time

Keeping a tight rein on administrative costs is one of the reasons Lindenwood has been able to operate productively. But managing the costs of instruction, the largest expense category of the income statement, is of even greater importance. And, as with much of Lindenwood's practices, the way in which instruction costs are controlled reflects management practices that are at odds with the recent trends in higher education.

Since the only commodity a professor offers is his or her time, the way in which that time is allocated and managed is the key to analyzing the costs and priorities of instruction. In *Inside Education Today*, Sowell estimated that at the modern university faculty time is roughly divided into equal thirds: teaching, research, and administration and other activities.[124] But at Lindenwood, the time allocation is substantially different. Based on the description of a Lindenwood professor's job from the previous chapter, I would estimate that the school's faculty spends 80% of its time on teaching, advising, and student related responsibilities, with its remaining time spent on other activities. Of course, determining how professors spend their time is difficult, but if Sowell's estimate is correct, and professors at most other schools in fact dedicate only of third of their time to students, the Lindenwood faculty spends more than twice as much of its time on actual instruction than is typical.

The financial arithmetic and educational implications that flow from such a difference in time allocation are obvious. With its faculty dedicated almost entirely to teaching, Lindenwood is able to deliver its instructional product to students on an efficient and economical basis. The near exclusive deployment of its faculty to instruction—the crux of the teaching university model—is a large part of the reason Lindenwood is able to realize such unusually high operating margins and, in so doing, is able to sustain its rapid growth without resort to borrowing.

Much of the rest of higher education, however, has succumbed to an expanded institutional model under which faculties are required to spend a substantial part of their time on research and other non-teaching activities. The cost of the professor's time for engaging in those non-teaching activities is financed in several ways. Today many schools borrow not just for capital projects, but also to cover deficits in their operational budget. Also, successful research universities are able to attract grant money to defray the cost of at least some of the research conducted on the campus. And universities with sizable endowments and donor bases are often able to use gift income to subsidize their financial shortfalls.

But invariably the means by which the university finances the diversion of faculty resources to pursuits other than teaching is by shortchanging its students. That shortchanging, as described earlier, comes in the form of classes that are large and impersonal, or which are taught by adjunct instructors and graduate assistants. It also comes in the form of artificially high tuition and fees, the subject of the next chapter.

Professors As Administrators: A Sure Road to Ineffective Management

If Sowell's estimate of faculty time allocation is correct, fully a third of that time vanishes into various administrative tasks that have little to do with teaching or researching. Where does all that faculty time go? In large part to managing various aspects of the university's affairs. At most colleges and universities the faculty acts as the *de facto* middle management. Enabled and emboldened by tenure, professors have historically been given a major say in university decisions, certainly on academic matters, and increasingly on non-academic matters as well. On some campuses, decisions as far reaching as new construction projects, admissions policies, or even the hiring or retention of the president depend on the advice and consent of the faculty. And since decisions by the faculty require consensus, committees are the inevitable byproduct. The pitfalls of this practice were amusingly set forth in a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education:*

> The middle level of academic management has always been the domain of scholar-administrators, who lecture on medieval history or the anatomy of mosquitoes and then rush to meetings to conduct the university's administrative business. The default operating mode of those amateur administrators is the leave-no-stone-unturned, consensus-oriented decision process that is appropriate for core issues of governance like faculty hiring and promotion. But professor-administrators often use the same standards in dealing with issues that are more managerial in nature, like how to market a new graduate program or what new information technology to adopt to simplify student advising...The result is an administrative culture that seems stuck in slow motion, blissfully ignoring efficiency and leadership. Committees spend hours hearing members say they have nothing new to report, but routinely run out of time to discuss the one important item on the agenda.[125]

Unfortunately, the wasted hours by "professor-administrators" cut into the time that could be more productively spent on matters affecting the student. To make matters worse, although the administrative role the faculty plays would seemingly reduce the number of purely administrative positions at the university, the opposite occurs. As committees develop a multitude of options and proposed initiatives, *additional* staff employees are required to sift through, respond to, and implement the committees' ideas. Bureaucracy begets bureaucracy.

With a simple, straightforward teaching mission and with an untenured faculty without a lot of time on its hands, Lindenwood's professors don't do a lot of "administering" through committee work. When Lindenwood's provost queried the faculty in 2005 about the amount of time spent in committee work per week, the average response per professor was ten minutes. This time allocation is in contrast to a more typical four to six *hours* per week on most campuses.[126] And the school may set a record in academia by having just five standing committees of its faculty.*

Faculty First v. Student First

A broader issue than the institutional inefficiencies that spring from the professor-as-administrator is the perversion of institutional mission that results from a faculty first view of the university. The prevailing attitude in higher education today still reflects the tradition of the ancient European universities that holds that the faculty *is* the university. In *Uses of the University*, Clark Kerr facetiously described the modern university as "a series of individual faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking."[127] Vedder, in discussing the influence of a self-serving faculty in university governance, wrote:

> Faculty members, who play a significant role in governing some institutions and have considerable control over their time, do what they like best and/or what is most likely to advance their careers: research...[t]hus, the redirection of resources away from instruction has resulted in significant part from decisions made not by the consumers of those resources, but by those providing them, in opposition to the "consumer

* The committees are General Education, Educational Policy, Faculty Development and Planning, Institutional Review, and Assessment.

> sovereignty" concept said to dominate the market process governing most private resource allocation.[128]

Lindenwood, however, rejects the faculty-first view of university administration in favor of management policies and practices that put the student first. In that sense, Lindenwood is more akin to a law firm, where professors, like a law firm's practicing attorneys, are the key and front line employees, and students, like the law firm's clients, represent the sole focus and all of the institution's resources are directed their way.

Just as lawyers do not spend all of their time with clients, Lindenwood professors do not spend all of their time with students. Lawyers must dedicate some amount of their time to "non-billable" hours—keeping up with the areas of the law in which they practice by reading relevant law journal articles, attending continuing legal education programs, undertaking pro bono projects, and by tending to administrative tasks such as file management, recruitment, and firm meetings. But by far the greatest amount of their time is filled with the work done on behalf of the client; that is, the work that can be billed to clients and sustain the financial viability of the firm. Similarly, it is crucial for Lindenwood's professors to spend enough time on professional development and necessary administrative tasks, but there is no question that the ultimate focus of all of their non-instructional duties should be the student.

Rewarding Good Teaching

A key to effective management is providing the proper incentives to key employees, and professors, like anyone else, will direct their efforts towards activities holding out the greatest rewards. Massy's review of an NCPI poll of 378 professors was illustrative of how the incentive system at most colleges and universities works. He found that, "even at liberal arts institutions that have tried to emphasize undergraduate education, professors still view research as the activity their institution rewards the most."[129] And, of course, that reward system should not be a surprise since published research adds to institutional prestige and research grants enhance the financial well being of both the school and the professor. Moreover, it is a reward system that can be evaluated somewhat objectively in order to determine a professor's compensation. The amount of output in the form of publications can be counted—as can the amount of input in the form of grants.

Properly awarding good teaching, however, is much more problematical since the results are less measurable. Recognizing that difficulty, much of education, whether at the college level or the primary and secondary levels, simply standardizes teacher compensation, using factors such as prevailing salary levels among peer schools, seniority, and highest academic degree attained. When teachers and professors are represented by labor unions those factors tend to become more codified, with everyone tending to move through their teaching career in lockstep pay regardless of effectiveness. Incentive compensation then tends to be limited to intangible factors such as the psychic rewards of working with young people and good teaching evaluations.

As with so many other things, Lindenwood has taken a much different approach to realize its institutional goals, and sets faculty compensation using a large component of merit. New professors are hired at a salary that reflects their experience, accomplishments, and the compensation levels that prevail for their academic discipline.* After the entry level salary has been set, however, each subsequent yearly increase in salary level is based on results.

Satisfactory performance by a professor results in a salary increase in line with increases in the cost of living. With a core inflation rate of 3-4% in recent years, that number tends to become the base rate. At the upper end, however, the best performers receive percentage salary increases substantially above that amount. Even though the higher end pay increases might provoke only a yawn from individuals employed in more money driven businesses in the private sector, the differential, through the power of compounding, becomes quite

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meaningful over time. The salary increases at the top end of the scale no doubt provide some of the explanation for Lindenwood's recent move from the bottom quartile in faculty salaries among its peer institutions to salary levels somewhat in excess of those institutions.

The challenge of merit-based compensation is to design a system that recognizes achievement, yet is fair to all. The principle vehicle used for this purpose at Lindenwood is the Individual Development Plan. Each year the university's professors, in coordination with their division's deans, set forth their goals for the year in an 11-point IDP, much of which deals with teaching effectiveness. At the end of the year, the dean reviews the achievement of the goals, in the larger context of the professors overall performance and effectiveness, and recommends to the university's provost and president some compensation increase in line with management's preset guidelines.

Any compensation system based on merit has an element of subjectivity, and that measure is notoriously large for teaching where the immediate benefits to students are difficult to measure and where classroom performance is largely unobservable. Exacerbating the problem is the inevitable bias caused by good (or bad) chemistry between the dean and the professor being evaluated. Injustices are bound to occur from time to time, but over the long term I expect that the system works reasonably well.* And those occasional injustices inherent in the merit system would seem to be overwhelmed by the injustices of a system that does not recognize effort and excellence at all. And beyond faculty satisfaction, the merit system in the end is designed to accomplish the goal of *student* satisfaction and benefit. Based on the growth in student enrollment at Lindenwood, some degree of student satisfaction is obvious. Just how important a role a highly motivated faculty has played in that remarkable growth is impossible to determine—but the role has no doubt been major.

* The university's low turnover rate provides some indication that the faculty is satisfied with Lindenwood's compensation system. According to a January 5, 2006 letter from President Spellmann to the American Association of University Professors, in recent years between 5% and 8% of the faculty leave the school, and in nearly all cases it is based on external factors such as retirement, health or a family matter.

CHAPTER TWELVE: CONTROLLING THE COSTS OF COLLEGE

The cost of higher education cannot rise faster than incomes indefinitely. Change is coming: it is just a question of when, and in what form.

– Richard Vedder[130]

Not one dollar will be spent without compelling justification of the expense, and all expenditures will be in the service of our mission and our students.

– Lindenwood University 2007[131]

The cost of a college education continues to rise unrelentingly, and at a rate far greater than the underlying inflation rate. The opening chapter of this book pointed out that the yearly tuition and fees for attendance at a private four-year institution increased, *in inflation-adjusted dollars*, from $8,000 in 1977 to over $21,000 in 2005.[132] When room and board charges are included, the average cost of a private college exceeds $29,000. As a result, the portion of family income that is consumed by higher education bills continues to increase. In 1977 the cost of sending a student to a private college accounted on average for 20% of median household income. By 2005, the percentage had grown to 45%.[133] Over any long term period one chooses to examine, the numbers show that the cost of going to a private college has grown at a rate greater than any other major part of a family budget—greater than medical costs and greater than the price of gasoline.

Tuition at public schools is far less, of course, because state appropriations pay a large share of their costs. But state operated colleges and universities have experienced similar outsized increases in their operating budgets and, since somebody has to pay, in 2005 the taxpayer subsidy of public higher education in the U.S. amounted to approximately $6,000 per student.[134]

This chapter attempts to answer three questions: First, what are the factors that drive college costs up so rapidly? Sifting through a vast amount of written opinion and analysis on the subject, much of it touched on earlier in this book, a number of key cost drivers appear over and over to explain higher education's extraordinary cost escalation. After explaining what's driving costs up, the second and more fundamental question is confronted: So what? A college education, regardless of its price, is still the acknowledged royal road to professional and financial success, and the payers of the growing costs of college still receive a decent return on their investment in the long run. Finally, how does Lindenwood do it? How has the school managed to provide a high quality education at a cost that has grown at a rate much *lower* than the overall inflation rate?

Cost Driver #1: Cookie Monster Management

Economist Howard Bowen has proposed what appears to be the settled wisdom on the topic of higher education spending with his "revenue theory of cost."[135] He argues that a school's cost structure is determined not by how much it needs, but by how much money it can get. To the extent students, donors, and lenders are willing to provide the money, colleges and universities are willing to spend it. In *Tuition Rising: Why College Costs So Much*, Cornell's Ronald Ehrenberg, puts the revenue theory of cost in simple terms: "[A]dministrators are like cookie monsters searching for cookies. They seek out all the resources that they can get their hands on and then devour them."[136]

A spend-as-much-as-you-can-get policy is always justified on the basis of gathering the maximum amount of resources to create a stellar university.

But some critics of Bowen's revenue-cost explanation, such as the Hoover Institution's Sowell, maintain that the rising costs add to tuition costs with no real increase in quality:

> Whatever colleges and universities choose to spend their money on is called a "cost." If they hire more administrators, or build more buildings to house them, or send the college president on more junkets, these are all additional costs. If they hire more research assistants for the faculty or more secretaries for the administrators, these are all costs...What colleges and universities seek to insinuate—misleadingly—by saying that costs have gone up is that the cost of doing what they have always done is rising, necessitating an increase in tuition.[137]

Cost Driver #2: Mission Creep

As an extension of Bowen's proposition that the more money an institution can get its hands on the more it can *spend*, it's safe to say that the more money a school can get, the more things it can *do*. And going counter to the trends in the business world, where diversification is out, and tight focus and lean and mean management are in, U.S. institutions of higher education use that money to engage in—or, more accurately, to subsidize—pursuits far beyond their education mission. They include: big-time sports (almost always a money losing proposition), cruise ship type amenities for students (with no apparent financial or educational payback), "for the greater good" social, entertainment, and cultural projects outside the university community (often undertaken without determining an apparent need for such projects) and, of course, research (much of it unfunded by third parties). These far flung pursuits are quite different from one another, but they have two things in common: they are substantial diversions from the educational mission and they almost always lose money for the institution. Whether directly, through special fees, or indirectly, through general tuition increases, the student eventually pays for the school's expansionist ways.

Cost Driver #3: The Academic Ratchet

University professors are engaged primarily in two highly worthwhile activities: creating knowledge through research and disseminating knowledge through teaching. With unlimited resources and time, both research and teaching could be pursued equally to the betterment of all concerned, but in actuality, of course, a university and its professors have to make choices and allocate those resources and time. Gradually, over at least the last 50 years, universities have shifted away from teaching and towards research. A prior chapter cited William Massy, formerly vice-provost at Stanford for research, who described an "academic ratchet" as "the steady, irreversible shift of faculty allegiance away from the goals of a given institution, toward those of an academic specialty."[138] He maintains that such a shift not only harms the quality of undergraduate education, but increases its cost as well.

> [The academic ratchet] denotes the advance of an independent, entrepreneurial spirit among faculty nationwide, leading to increased emphasis on research and publication, and on teaching one's specialty in favor of general introduction courses, often at the expense of coherence in an academic curriculum. Institutions seeking to increase their own prestige may contribute to the ratchet by reducing faculty teaching and advising responsibilities across the board, thus enabling faculty to pursue their individual research and publication with fewer distractions. The academic ratchet raises an institution's costs and results in undergraduates paying more to at-

> tend institutions in which they receive less than in previous decades.[139]

At a Johns Hopkins or a Caltech, where a high percentage of faculty research is presumably underwritten by grants, it is understandable why research prevails and even how those institutions can engage in such research on a cost effective basis. At a liberal arts school serving mainly undergraduates, however, it is much more difficult to justify—and very expensive to support—the deployment of professors away from the classroom. The great majority of research undertaken in the humanities and the soft sciences is not supported by grant money, but rather funded in substantial part by student tuition dollars. Unless there is compelling reason to believe that the time professors spend engaging in research enhances the classroom experience—and the evidence from prior chapters suggests strongly that it does not—the cost of education has been needlessly increased.

Cost Driver #4 Faculty Governance

William F. Buckley, Jr. famously remarked that he would rather be governed by the first several hundred names in the Boston phone book than by the Harvard faculty. I expect he was referring in part to the perceived political ideology of the typical professor, but also in part to the administrative ineptness of most academics. That ineptness may spring from the professor's penchant for analysis and a naturally inquisitive mind that delights in following ideas wherever they may lead. It may also spring from the fact that their experience in the management of university affairs is almost always confined to committee work where consensus creation is a vital function. But while analysis, inquisitiveness, and consensus formation can be admirable in other settings, they always slow the decision process—often to the point where no decision can be reached—and stifle effective management practices.

Another problem with faculty governance is that it is ultimately self-serving. Although faculty power at the university is deeply rooted in history and convention, when professors make policy and set priorities, it is still an example of the inmates running the asylum. Their primary constituency will ultimately be themselves and, being human, the resources of the university will tilt their way rather than toward the student. As Ehrenberg delicately puts it, "faculty involved in shared governance sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between what is best for the institution as a whole and what is best for the existing faculty members."[140]

Although another argument against faculty governance is hardly needed, there is the major problem of accountability. Since nearly all colleges and universities provide tenure, professor-managers cannot be held responsible for bad decisions in any meaningful way. Unlike the "real world" where bad decisions have consequences for those in charge, tenured professors remain insulated from any kind of market discipline. They can't be fired for poor judgment calls and deficient management abilities. They are, for all practical purposes, unaccountable.

Cost Driver # 5: The Pursuit of Prestige

No development has had a more perverse affect on the economics of higher education than the advent of the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. Consider what the rankings have done to skew costs and productivity. The economic measure of productivity is difficult to calculate in a complex economy, but it is simple in concept: units of output per units of input. Well-run businesses and economies are successful in producing a maximum amount of output with a minimum of input. But under the criteria upon which the *U.S. News* bases its rankings—rankings that now define the hopes and dreams of aspiring parents and students—just the opposite holds true. Rather than *increasing* output, universities intent on boosting their rankings intentionally *restrict* the number of students they will accept and educate. With the objective of raising their "selectivity" score for *U.S. News*, tens of thousands of qualified students are turned away from the nation's most well known—and well-endowed—colleges and universities. At the most selective schools there are so many well qualified seekers of admission that who gets in and who doesn't often hinges on arbitrary and unpredictable factors, such as whether the band needs a tuba player or an whether a student from North Dakota would provide demographic balance.

And the *U.S. News* incentive is no less perverse on the input side. One important component of the rankings is the amount of money a school spends per student. So schools competing for high rankings are not only motivated to restrict the number of students, but in addition to lavish as much spending as possible on a small number of fortunate sons. Cornell's Ehrenberg is forthright about the power of the magazine's college rating system to push up costs: "To the extent that the rankings are based partly on how much an institution spends on each student, as is the popular *USNWR* ranking of undergraduate institutions, no administrator in his or her right mind would take actions to cut costs unless he or she had to."[141]

The upshot is that American universities intent on enhancing their rankings and prestige—and that's nearly all of them—invariably become high cost operations by minimizing output and maximizing input. It has become a rather insane system that has turned college admissions into a kind of lottery system—and a very expensive one at that for the student.*

The Results of Rationing a College Education to the Highest Bidders

It is obvious that college costs cannot continue to outpace inflation—and thereby consume an increasing portion of family income—without repercussion. As post-secondary education becomes limited to a shrinking portion of the U.S. population, namely to those who have the financial wherewithal to shoulder its increasing costs, a significant segment of tomorrow's workforce will be shut off from higher education and therefore ill-prepared to participate in an increas-

* Not all schools succumb to the prestige pressures, but rather buck the trend, sacrificing superficial measures of prestige for the larger goal of educating able students. James Fallows, who writes on education for the *Atlantic Monthly*, cites Chicago's DePaul University as a quality university that stresses greater access over greater selectivity. DePaul has seen its enrollment grow rapidly and is now the largest Catholic university in the country. By its calculations, it could have kept its current freshman class the same size as 1992's if it had limited its acceptance rate to 28% of applicants—a level on par with very selective schools. Instead it sacrificed its *US News* rankings by accepting 68% of applicants and enrolled nearly two and a half times more students than 1992. (James Fallows, "College Admissions: A Substitute for Quality?", Hersh and Merrow, ed,, p. 42.)

ingly knowledge-based economy. The evidence of rationing college attendance based on wealth is mounting and has the following unfortunate consequences:

A low-income freeze-out. Educators make the claim that, despite its increasing costs, an investment in a college education makes economic sense in terms of personal and economic advancement. And that claim is borne out by statistics that show that on average the lifetime incomes of college graduates are nearly twice those for individuals who only finished high school. Beyond being more remunerative, the careers opened by a college degree would seem to hold greater inherent job satisfaction. In any event, a degree opens new vistas and options.

But the rewards of higher education are only meaningful if the path to college is open, and study after study shows that having financial means rather than academic ability determines who goes to college and who doesn't. One such study looked at college attendance by students who were in the highest quartile academically, but in the lowest quartile with respect to family income. It turned out that students in those two quartiles were no more likely to attend college than a group whose characteristics were just the opposite: in the lowest quartile academically but in the highest family income quartile.[142] Another study looked at the changes over time in who received a college degree and who did not. In 1970, roughly 40% of students from the wealthiest quarter of American families had earned a degree, but by 2003 that percentage had grown to 75%. By contrast, only 9% of students from the poorest quarter of the income had graduated from college in 2003, just a slightly higher percentage change from 1970, and hardly any change in the last decade.[143]

Part of the reason for the disparate graduation rates between rich and poor is that after low income students enroll, the high cost of college often makes it difficult or impossible to make it through the four years to graduation. Students from more prosperous families can normally find a way to finish up their work despite economic setbacks. But for poorer students, a parent's lost job or an unexpected financial crisis means withdrawal from school prior to receiving a degree. These realities are reflected in graduation rates. According to researchers at the Brown University-based Futures Projects, only 7% of low income students who start college shortly after high school receive a degree by the time they reach age 24.[144] And once a student drops out of college, entering the workforce and taking on financial responsibilities, it becomes difficult to again muster the time and financial resources to return and graduate.[145] Thus, the increasingly high cost of college works to fix, if not widen, the gaps and opportunities between the nation's rich and poor.

In recent years the gap has been widened by the colleges themselves, as they tilt their scholarships away from need-based and towards merit-based. As rank-conscious institutions attempt to increase the perceived quality of their student bodies, they more and more award financial assistance to students with high academic performance rather than financial need. A Lumina Foundation study found a 22% increase between 1995 and 2000 in scholarships awarded to students from families with an income of less than $40,000, but a 145% increase during the same period for students from families with incomes greater than $100,000.[146] Of course there is a strong case to be made for rewarding academic performance and promise, but that case need not overwhelm the equally praiseworthy goal of providing opportunities for upward mobility to the less fortunate.

In a related matter, there is emerging evidence that rising costs are having an adverse effect on minority enrollment in college. The surging Hispanic population since the 1970s, for instance, has changed the demographic profile of the United States and today Hispanics account for over half of the country's foreign-born population. They and their children will account for the major source of new workers in years to come and, in an economy that is increasingly knowledge-based, higher education will be vital to their development as well as to the U.S. overall. Yet the percentage of 18 to 24 year old Hispanics enrolled in a college or university is smaller today than it was in 1976,[147] and of those students who enroll as freshmen, around a third drop out before they are sophomores.[148] Affordability may not be the only reason minority students don't enroll in college, and then tend to drop out after they get there, but it is likely the most important one.

Debt hangovers. With college costs consuming an ever increasing share of the household budget, few of today's families are in a position to pay college costs out of current income or savings. As a result, parents and students have been incurring ever-ascending levels of debt to be paid off after graduation. And since the growth rate in compensation levels for new graduates has not kept pace with their soaring costs of college, the amount of time needed to retire indebtedness typically lengthens, to the point where many heavily debt-burdened graduates view their obligations much like a long-term home mortgage. Another recent development that has sprung from heavy student debt is the phenomenon of recent college graduates, in order to make ends meet, moonlighting at one or more extra jobs in addition to their first full-time job out of college.[149] Whatever the means graduates use to retire their college debt, the amount is large and getting larger, and for many it impairs job performance and achieving personal goals—marriage, home purchase, personal savings—that were more realistic for prior generations. It's one thing to acknowledge that life is tough and everyone needs to make sacrifices to reach one's goals; it's yet another when those goals are compromised—or even abandoned—by the demands of fulfilling financial demands from unwarrantedly high college costs.*

Making everyone poorer. Lest the damages of a low productivity higher education system seem localized and particular to a few specific groups, in reality the problems indirectly affect us all. If any sector of an economy operates sub-optimally, its inefficiencies detract from overall wealth and well being. And excessive investment in higher education by parents and students means that other sectors of the economy will suffer from insufficient funding. If Vedder is correct in his previously cited estimates that productivity in higher education is declining and that only $.21 out of every new dollar entering institutions of

* As a sign of the times—with respect to both the rise of student debt and the use of the Internet—a special website (www.studentdebtalert.org) has been established by the student-run Public Interest Research Group to give debt-laden college graduates a place to tell their individual stories. Most of the stories are cautionary tales about excessive borrowing to pay for one's college education.

higher education finds its way to instruction, these institutions represent a drag on the larger economy.

And it bears restatement that higher education is not just another industry. At one point, certainly within my lifetime, one could take a more philosophical view about going to college. With plenty of well paying jobs that required limited education and offered long employment security, higher education was viewed by many as a luxury. But with what Thomas Freidman identified in *The World is Flat* as the "triple convergence"—a global, web-enabled playing filed; less structured, less permanent international organizations; and unbridled worldwide competition from anyone, anywhere—the need for an education that can provide specialized skill, yet offer sufficient breadth for adaptability in an uncertain future becomes increasingly vital.[150] It seems evident that in today's changed world, rationing higher education by family wealth is no longer an acceptable practice. We cannot afford to deprive the U.S. of the vast amount of intellectual capital needed to retain its prominence and prosperity in the twenty-first century.

The Lindenwood Model to Lower Student Costs

Lindenwood University has surfaced as a welcome exception to higher education's trends toward high cost and exclusiveness. Its tuition for the 2006-2007 academic year was $12,000, considerably lower than the $21,000 per year average charge for private universities.* And, after giving effect to the $2,400 reduction that the great majority of the university's students take advantage of through participation in the "work and learn" program, and with a generous use of merit and need scholarships, the effective tuition rate is considerably below the "sticker price." The comparatively low cost has come about over time as Lindenwood, going counter to virtually all of its peer institutions, has kept a tight rein on its tuition charges. In four of the last six years, in fact, the university

* As this book was going to press, Lindenwood announced an increase in its tuition to $12,400 per year for the 2007-2008 academic year.

has put on a tuition *freeze.* In the two non-freeze years, the undergraduate's tuition cost went up by only 1.5% and 3.5% respectively.

There were no large increases in the university endowment that made the tuition freezes possible. The school's endowment fund is just a little over $60 million. Neither did the university borrow, remaining the only college or university in Missouri with no long-term debt. Finally, with tens of millions of dollars going into new construction projects in recent years, including six new residence halls, a performance arena, a new student center and, most recently, a fine and performing arts center, there was certainly no curtailment in capital projects. Rather, the university has been able to provide its students with a low-cost education—and, in my opinion, with a high quality liberal arts-based education at that—by operating very differently from most colleges and universities.

It's worth repeating once more that Lindenwood's operating methods are not applicable to all schools. The landscape of higher education is incredibly varied. One size and style do not fit all, and there may be as many sizes and styles in higher education as there are schools. But short of universal application, I believe the following factors behind Lindenwood's remarkable success are especially noteworthy.

A Narrow Mission: A Tale of Two Universities.

If there were ever a stark contrast between two universities and their respective missions and administrative costs it would be between Lindenwood and its nearby rival, the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Both universities serve roughly the same number of students. But UMSL is a multiversity of the type described earlier in this book, conducting a fair amount of research and community service along with carrying out its education mission; Lindenwood is, pure and simple, a teaching institution. In large part because of the costs in carrying out its multifaceted mission, UMSL's total operating expenses are a multiple of those at Lindenwood.

Without access to the detailed financial statements it is not possible to make line-by-line comparisons between costs, but it is instructive to look at the differences in administrative staffing levels that accompany a multiversity as contrasted with a teaching university. Lindenwood's top management includes exactly one president and one provost. By contrast, UMSL, which is only *one* of the campuses of the University of Missouri system administered from Columbia, Missouri, lists the following positions on the St. Louis campus: One chancellor, four vice-chancellors, one associate vice-chancellor, two assistants to the chancellor, two provosts, one vice-provost, four associate provosts, and one associate vice-provost.*

Below the university's top management levels, the contrasts are equally stark. At UMSL there are innumerable deans, associate deans, assistant deans, and emeritus deans administering the various schools, with those schools having their own middle managers in the form of department chairs for each academic discipline. At Lindenwood, there are no separate "schools," just divisions of the university. Each academic division has one dean (who also teaches, typically carrying a teaching load about half of that of a professor) and several program managers who, in addition to their full teaching schedules, co-ordinate the work of the other professors within their academic discipline.

An outsider's look at the way UMSL uses its physical plant would also make one suspect that the school's multiversity mission is expensive to support. The Touhill Performing Arts Center, commented on in an earlier chapter, is used mainly for professional performances; Lindenwood's own performing arts center, due to be completed in 2008, is designed for student performances and houses many studios and classrooms. UMSL's practice of not holding classes on Friday presumably provides additional time for its faculty to conduct research and en-

* The UMSL web site lists the complete titles as follows: Chancellor, Interim Special Assistant to the Chancellor, Assistant to the Chancellor for Public Affairs, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Associate Provost for Professional Development and Director, Center for Teaching and Learning, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Director, Center for International Studies, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of Graduate School, Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services, Vice Chancellor for Managerial and Technological Services, Associate Vice Chancellor for Information Technology, Vice Provost, Associate Vice Provost, Vice Chancellor for University Relations, Vice Provost for Research.

gage in other non-instructional activities. But a full weekday without significant utilization reduces the productivity of the school's extensive campus by 20%.

To support its broad scale mission in the face of cutbacks in state funding in recent years, UMSL has resorted to substantial long-term borrowing. It has also instituted sizeable increases in tuition. Unlike Lindenwood, with just a single 1.5% tuition increase between 2002 and 2006,* the tuition increases at UMSL (and on the other University of Missouri campuses) have been 7.5%, 19.8%, 14.8%, 3.5% and 5.0% for years 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006.[151] Partly as a result of UMSL tuition increases, and Lindenwood's tuition freezes, Lindenwood is often able to offer its students a private undergraduate education that is competitively priced with that of UMSL—even though the State of Missouri provides UMSL with a per student subsidy of approximately $6,000 per year and Lindenwood with none. The $6,000 differential may also be viewed, of course, as the amount Missouri taxpayer's pay in order for UMSL to pursue its non-instructional ventures.

Reversing the academic ratchet.

It's fair to say that with Lindenwood's adoption of its teaching university model in 1989, the school reversed the academic ratchet with a vengeance. Many of its faculty members publish articles and reviews in their discipline and participate in conferences and symposia off campus, but everyone at Lindenwood knows that teaching is the central focus. That focus is translated into a teaching load that puts Lindenwood professors in the classroom roughly twice as long as their counterparts in other universities, and obviously offers a major part of the reason the university can offer its students an affordable education.

But does doubling the number of classes a professor teaches actually double his or her teaching productivity? I believe a significant percentage of my colleagues would dispute the notion, claiming that the unusually heavy teaching requirement diminishes effectiveness because of the sheer weight of work entailed in preparing for and teaching classes, along with the significant work

* For the academic year 2007-2008, Lindenwood increased undergraduate tuition by 3.5%.

of grading papers and examinations and advising students. But I respectfully disagree with those colleagues. Freed from the publish or perish expectations and the heavy committee work endemic to other universities, I believe most Lindenwood professors feel comfortable in teaching twice the number of classes and have few concerns that their students are being shortchanged. The teaching load requires a full workday—often extended by toting work home—but, in my opinion, it does not require a compromise in quality.*

One More Time: Quality Control v. Value Added.

The issue of quality figures into the cost equation in another important manner. Driven by the pursuit of prestige, too many universities purposely "admit only the best and discard the rest" in order to enhance selectivity and thereby move up in college rankings. Such admission policies reduce diversity and reinforce the earlier noted trends in higher education towards exclusivity. It is a practice that tends to shut out first generation college students, students from inferior high schools, and students who have simply not reached intellectual maturity as a teenager.

It is also a practice that increases costs. Concentrating a university's resources on an artificially limited student is an expensive proposition. Lindenwood, by contrast employs an admissions policy that is only moderately selective, looking for ways to bring students to the campus rather than for ways to keep them out. That welcoming view of students is one of the reasons Lindenwood's undergraduate population has grown at double-digit rates in recent years. It is also one of the reasons the school is affordable for its new students. Faculty and other instructional costs have generally grown at a rate commensurate rate with the growth of the student body, but administrative and overhead expenses have

* During the time I have worked on this book I was appointed dean of the Management Division—the "business school" at most other schools—and one of my jobs is reviewing the student evaluations for some 20 other instructors in that division. What comes out of those anonymously completed evaluations is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of instruction and dedication to the student. There is virtually no mention of foreshortened classes, insufficient preparedness, untimely grading of papers and tests, or any of the other practices that would signal overextended professors. And I have no concerns that the de-emphasis of research hinders scholarship or classroom effectiveness. The most common adjective I see in student critiques of their professors is probably "knowledgeable."

been held in check and spread over a larger student population. The end result has been a reduction in the per capita costs incurred by the school, a reduction that has been passed on to the student in the form of lower tuition and fees. The competitive costs of attending Lindenwood in turn leads to greater interest in attending the school, which serves to further increase the number of students. As long as the university is able to manage its costs and maintain its educational quality, the cycle is likely to be self-perpetuating and beneficial for the student.

Schools like Lindenwood, combining a relatively open admissions policy with a demanding curriculum, face a unique set of challenges. Letting most students in the school means that some will fail and student retention rates will tend to be lower than the selective schools. Remedial education will be required and professors, especially when teaching underclassmen, will be faced with classrooms with widely varying academic abilities. Those challenges can be formidable and at times discouraging. Yet for many of us, the opportunity put into practice the Lindenwood mission statement of creating "enlightened, useful citizens of a global community" for a wide segment of the population of young people—rather than rationing education by costs or turning as many away as possible in the pursuit of institutional prestige—makes the effort immensely worthwhile.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: A MATTER OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Change, when it comes, is likely to emanate from below, rather than above. And it is likely to come from small institutions in the hinterlands, voices crying in the wilderness, rather than from one of the bulwarks of the academic establishment.

– Charles Sykes[152]

Eventually, but perhaps not for decades, Lindenwood will be recognized s a pioneer in the remaking of higher education. Most importantly, our students and mission will be well served by our vision and perseverance.

– Lindenwood University 2007[153]

An implicit message of this book has been that higher education is on a collision course with reality. Over the last several decades, colleges and universities have greatly expanded their reach and scope, most becoming multiversities of one form or another. Yet their growth has not been accompanied by the scales of economy to be expected from an expanding enterprise. Quite the contrary, most schools suffer from low productivity and runaway costs. At the same time, the quality of their core product, undergraduate education, has become highly suspect. A second message, perhaps not so implicit, is that Lindenwood

University—one of the "small institutions in the hinterlands"—may provide valuable lessons for bringing academia back to reality. In the end, those lessons come down to institutional accountability.

The Problem of Inattentive Trustees

The governance of American business is by no means perfect, but corporate directors generally perform their oversight role well—for the simple reason that they are held accountable it they do not perform well. They work under the constant and critical eye of the shareholders who elected them and who expect to realize a competitive return on their investment. And beyond the shareholders, the directors are held responsible by the various legal and regulatory bodies if the companies they govern go astray.

The counterpart of the corporate director, the college or university trustee, does not work under the same external disciplines. For one thing, there is no single constituency, such as the shareholders, that elects trustees to their posts. Rather they serve multiple constituencies—students, donors, government agencies and, often, the larger community—none of which has a direct role in electing them. Trustees are usually proposed for membership on the board by another trustee or by the school's president or other top administrative officers, and then routinely elected by the rest of the trustees. In too many instances the oversight function is reversed, with trustees viewing their position as a kind of honorarium—revocable only if the trustee does not raise a sufficient amount of money for the school.

Yet the trustees or directors of institutions of higher education should be the ultimate defense against mismanagement. And, as in business, the board's most important task in making sure a college or university is run correctly comes down to recruiting and hiring the right chief executive. In Lindenwood's case, the directors serving on its board in 1989 at least got that one right. They may have been less than diligent by letting the school reach such a state of disrepair that it teetered near bankruptcy, but they performed their fiduciary responsibility well in that year by calling in a tough-minded educator to rescue the institution and transform it into the thriving school it is today. Most schools never reach the state of financial exigency that marked Lindenwood in the 1980s, but one wonders how many trustees, though successful and demanding in running their own organizations, tolerate a sub-par president or chancellor of a university—and therefore tolerate a costly, poorly directed institution—just for the sake of expediency.

Colleges and universities could be managed infinitely better if trustees would ask their presidents and chancellors the right questions—and expect to receive satisfactory answers. Those questions should go beyond the curious (e.g. budget line items and the background of recent appointees) and beyond the merely polite (e.g. enrollment statistics and prospects for the football team) and towards the meaningful: What is our institutional core competency and mission? How do we define success and measure it against our peer group? Given our mission, how does each part of the university's operation fulfill it? Where is the school most vulnerable and in need of shoring up? What is the university's management succession plan?

Probing questions from competent trustees would go a long way towards fixing what's wrong with higher education, but I doubt that such questions are often raised. During my short tenure as a trustee at a Midwest liberal arts college, I casually asked the president in a private meeting how much it costs to educate a student. It was the kind of question most business CEOs could answer in a second about their product or service, but my question was met with uncertainty. I imagine the president knew instinctively that the only reason someone would ask a question about costs was in order to cut them, and I had the feeling he thought my energies would best be served raising funds for expansion, rather than inquiring how overly expensive programs might be curtailed. That presidential mindset, along with trustee compliance, appears to be widespread in American higher education.

If the typical university trustee is less than a conscientious and forceful steward of the institution for fear of losing his or her prestigious board seat, there is another powerful group on campus that has no such fear: a tenured faculty. At most colleges and universities the president, formally or informally, decides which trustees will be up for election from year to year. Removing trustees from the slate is the polite but effective way of firing them. Ironically, the university president does not have the same power to fire key employees if such employees are tenured professors. As a result, the most forceful and vocal group on campus—the individuals unafraid of posing the hard questions—is the faculty. If nature abhors a vacuum, tenured professors are there to fill it.

In one sense, the faculty's tenure-enabled outspokenness is a good thing. It forces the issues and keeps the university administration honest and responsive. In the most extreme cases, a disgruntled faculty, through a vote of no-confidence, can effectively fire the president. But unfortunately, professors are not usually equipped by experience or motivation to be effective stewards. From the most practical standpoint, few professors have the top-level organizational experience to see the big picture. And more importantly, as this book has often argued, professors have the natural human tendency to direct the university's resources for their own benefit. And whether their benefits take the form of lighter teaching loads, greater administrative support, or a greater dedication of their time to research, the end result is invariably lower productivity, a poorer quality of undergraduate education, and the weakened financial health of the university.

A large segment of university boards consists of individuals who come from high level business positions and understand the necessity of strong leadership to balance the legitimate claims of labor against other organizational needs. But as a group, trustees often seem content in their role as fundraisers, ceding their governance role to the administrators and the faculty.

Making State Schools Accountable

The responsibilities of trustees are magnified when they serve on the boards of public colleges and universities. In addition to the well being of the institution and the welfare of the students, they have a fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers who provide the greatest share of the school's operating funds. But there is little that suggests that trustees are any more diligent at state-supported institutions—and much to suggest they are less so.

The prior chapter in this book compared Lindenwood with the nearby University of Missouri-St. Louis, noting that, in terms of students served, the schools are similarly sized institutions, but that UMSL operates with a top management structure vastly larger than Lindenwood's. UMSL employs some 14 individuals who are one variety or another of chancellor or provost, while Lindenwood has just a single president and provost. The large differential in staffing apparently exists throughout the University of Missouri's four-campus network, where there are 16,000 staff employees supporting 7,000 faculty members, a 2.3 staff to faculty ratio.[154] Lindenwood, by contrast, has just 185 administrative employees for 161 full-time faculty members, a staff-to-faculty ratio of just 1.1.[155]

The striking difference, of course, reflects the fact that in addition to teaching, the University of Missouri is a much more complex institution than Lindenwood, with research projects and a host of institutes and programs run under its auspices. But after allowing for the greater complexity of the University of Missouri, I suspect that the larger part of the difference stems from the fact that it is a government-funded organization, prone to the bureaucracy and excessive spending illustrated throughout this book.

Whatever the reasons, the upshot is that there is a major difference between the cost of an education in the University of Missouri and that at Lindenwood—and the consequences to the Missouri taxpayer are profound. Lindenwood, with no taxpayer subsidy, with no debt, and with only a modest endowment, is very often able to offer students an out-of-pocket schedule of tuition and fees competitive with those they would pay at UMSL, an institution subsidized by Missouri taxpayers at a rate of over $6,000 per student.* Put

* According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the state of Missouri provides a yearly subsidy in excess of $400 million for approximately 63,000 students attending the four campuses of the University of Missouri. ("Hold Those Tigers," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 21, 2006.) Based on those numbers, the per student subsidy is approximately $6,350. Since the numbers presumably include some percentage of part-time students, the subsidy per full time equivalent student would be accordingly larger.

another way, if the *student* pays the same amount to attend either Lindenwood or UMSL, the $6,000 subsidy paid by the *taxpayer* for that student's costs is due to operational inefficiency, activities unrelated to the instruction of students, or, more likely, some combination of the two.

When discussing the costs of state-supported higher education, some observers of higher education financing suggest that a more efficient, voucher-based subsidy should be considered, where the student is funded rather than the institution. Under that type of arrangement, each student attending an accredited four year college in Missouri would receive a yearly stipend—based in large part on need, but certainly less than $6,000 per student in the aggregate—to attend a four-year college of his or her choice. If implemented correctly, such a proposal has the potential to widen student choice. Wider choice is a worthy goal in and of itself, but a voucher system would also impose a much needed sense of cost management and accountability on the existing public colleges and universities.

Of course a system that relies on subsidizing students rather than institutions would lead inevitably to privatization of public colleges and universities—and one can almost hear the howls of protest that such a movement would create. But the idea is gaining traction in states, which like Missouri, are under severe financial pressure to reduce their higher education subsidies in order to make room for the rising costs of Medicaid and other state responsibilities. James C. Garland, president of Miami University, a *public* university in Ohio, proposes a privatization plan for Ohio that would:

> ...turn all or part of each public four-year school into a private, nonprofit corporation. Then phase out each school's subsidy gradually, to enable campuses to grandfather in current students and adjust to the new environment. Finally, reallocate the freed-up subsidy dollars to scholarship; valid at any accredited four-year college in the state,

> they would go primarily to middle-and low-income students, with some reserved for other groups meeting state needs.[156]

Garland contrasts the current method of state subsidization of higher education to the reduction of poverty through food stamps, arguing that students should be subsidized rather than institutions—just as food stamps are provided to poor individuals rather than to supermarkets. If vouchers for higher education were provided to students for attending schools of their choice, private or public, those students would obviously enjoy a broader range of education options—and all the state's colleges and universities would just as obviously be subjected to a healthy dose of institutional pressure to provide a quality education at an affordable price. And becoming subject to cost and product disciplines would likely force a narrowing of institutional mission among state-funded schools and pare away the layers of bureaucracy and ill-conceived programs that too often characterize those schools.

Some voucher-supported students and their parents would inevitably make poor choices, perhaps attending institutions more adept at marketing and sales pitches than at providing educational substance. But Vernon L. Smith, a 2002 Nobel Laureate in Economics and a professor at George Mason University, argues that the main reason students and parents may be less competent in making their own school choices is that, with most of the cost of their education being paid for them by taxpayers, they have little incentive to become competent consumers in the first place. He, like Garland, argues for channeling the states' subsidies of higher education through the student, a practice that will make students more savvy customers, and in the process make universities more responsible for their spending: "Since he who pays…the college calls the tune, we have a better chance of disciplining cost and tailoring services to the customer's willingness to pay."[157]

In arguing for his voucher and privatization proposal, Miami University's Garland writes that competition would go a long way towards bringing public universities in line, and in the process improving higher education and lowering its cost:

> Students would choose schools that offered them the highest-quality programs, the most value and a competitive tuition. Colleges that lost market share would either improve their offerings, lower their prices or risk going out of business. Lacking an automatic pricing advantage, formerly public colleges would raise tuition to make up their revenue shortfall, but no more than the market would allow. Competition would force campuses to become increasingly lean, efficient and strategic.[158]

How U.S. News Could Reform Higher Education

As appealing as the idea may be for the direct subsidization of students and the privatization of higher education, the political realities are such that the prospect of any beneficial short-term change with those approaches is rather remote. By contrast, *The U.S. News & World Report* could effect immediate and significant improvement in the nature and quality of undergraduate instruction by taking one bold action: Incorporating some measure of the quality of education received by students in its yearly ranking of the nation's "best colleges."

In conducting the research for this book, the two biggest surprises to me came from the *U.S. News* rankings. The first surprise was how immensely powerful the ratings are, not just as an influential guidebook for prospective students, but more importantly as a driver of institutional policies and decisions. Every recently written book I reviewed on the subject of American higher education—even Tom Wolfe's novel, *I Am Charlotte Simmons*—made prominent mention of the influential rankings. And the authors who were currently or formerly in policy making positions at colleges and universities are forthright in their acknowledgment of how the peculiarities of the ranking system influenced their management decisions.[159] To a one, they lament both the power of the *U.S. News* and the danger of making wrongheaded decisions based only on enhancing their school's position on the list.

The second surprise was that, for all practical purposes, the formula for judging what makes a college "good" includes no variable for the quality of instruction students receive. Common sense would suggest that such a variable would be the overarching determinant of school quality, but among the many weighted measures used to compile the *U.S. News* rankings, there is not one that provides a direct measure of what a student is likely to get out of his or her investment in time or funds. The magazine uses a few indirect measures, such the student-to-faculty ratio and the amount of spending per student. But when the faculty pursues research and other activities outside the classroom the student-to-faculty student ratio has little meaning. Likewise, with most schools adopting the multiversity operating model, the amount of spending *per* student can be very different from the spending *on* the student, and even spending on the student is suspect to the extent it includes non-instructional endeavors. But when it comes to providing any clue to education received—the knowledge and skills that students come in with, compared to what they leave with four years later—the magazine is without the least bit of help.

Yet *despite* that shortcoming, the rankings continue to influence the manner in which schools are governed. And, since the rankings provide a prestige meter for prospective undergraduate applicants, a self-reinforcing cycle takes hold, with the top rated schools experiencing an ever greater demand for entry by students and their parents, spiraling into a minor form of application hysteria. The disconnect between "getting in" and learning something afterwards was spoken to by Tom Wolfe in a recent talk to Harvard students:

> You know, I come from a town, New York City, where families are rated according to whether or not their children get into Harvard. But I have

> never met a single parent—not one—who has ever shown the slightest curiosity about what happens to them once they get here or what they may have become by the time they graduate. So I am delighted by this opportunity to meet you. Perhaps I'll find out for myself.[160]

I believe *U.S. News* could enhance American undergraduate education if, in addition to its list of the best national universities and its list of the best liberal arts colleges, the magazine compiled a third list: the colleges and universities that are the most effective in educating their students. *U.S. News* has all along been sympathetic to the notion of injecting a quality measure into its rankings, but its editors throw up their hands when it comes to just how to do that. A part of the reason, no doubt, lies with the lack of interest on the part of the top-rated schools in cooperating. For the same reason that a political candidate running well ahead of the pack has little incentive to enter into a debate with other candidates, the schools with high listings have nothing to gain, and perhaps a lot to lose, by opening up the contest.

But that's exactly why *U.S. News*, with its preeminence in ranking higher education, should compile a third list, one based on voluntary participation and third party assessment of what students are likely to get out of their four year investment. While that might appear to be a daunting job, there are several existing organizations and initiatives that the magazine could draw on for its raw material. In Chapter 4 I briefly described the work of the Pew Charitable Trust-sponsored National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which, since 1999, has been surveying some 600,000 students at 850 schools to determine the extent to which those students are engaged in their learning. The originators of the NSSE system acknowledge that student engagement is not the be-all and end-all of learning, but studies show that it is a highly valid measure of whether students are actively involved and therefore getting something out of their education.

Taking a different route to judging a college education, in 2003 the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) put forth a set of criteria for the basics of a college curricula, essentially a list of courses that any college educated person should have taken. Earlier in the book I cited the distressing results of ACTA's survey of fifty well known schools on that measure. Many of the *U.S. News'* top rated schools are among the 50 that the ACTA looked at, and most scored a D or an F on the council's rating measures. So no matter how engaged a student may be, he or she is not going to wind up with much of an education if meaningful courses are not made available and part of the required curriculum.

The most relevant measure of educational quality may be the before-and-after approach taken by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE). Until recently the CAE was an affiliate of the RAND Corporation, but is now fully independent and funded by a long roster of foundations. Its major work is a longitudinal study that looks at the intellectual capabilities of a school's incoming freshmen in the fall (adjusted for SAT and ACT scores) and its graduating seniors in the spring.[161] In other words, the CAE takes a value added approach to assessing the attainments of students as a result of their college experience—a far more meaningful measure than the *U.S. News* approach of just taking a one-time snapshot of a school's entering freshman class.

As commendable as the aforementioned work of the CAE, ACTA, and NSSE may be, it all suffers from two major problems—both of which could be solved by *U.S. News.* First, the good work of these organizations is largely unknown and rarely reported on by the media. *U.S. News* could cure that problem in one fell swoop by incorporating the results in the suggested new rankings. Certainly there are other, perhaps alternative, sources and measures *U.S. News* would employ to devise a meaningful ranking of quality, but these three organizations have provided a convenient starting point. It would seem to be a problem the magazine could solve through its ingenuity at designing rankings.

The second problem is that the schools listed in the rankings would by necessity be limited to volunteering institutions. Because of the frontrunner problem alluded to above, most *U.S. News*-designated prestigious schools are likely to balk, along with schools without the confidence to publicly reveal the efficacy of their educational programs. But as the third list became an accepted and relied upon part of the magazine's quality rankings, pressure would no doubt be exerted on the holdouts to fall in line or risk loss of prospective students.

A New Role for Donors: Reformers

Another potential force for positive change in higher education resides with its donor base. In the U.S., colleges and universities are major beneficiaries of charitable contributions, and in 2005 received $25.6 billion in donations, an amount surpassed only by the aggregate contributions to churches.[162] The importance of gifts is reflected in the income statements of both private and public schools, but in particular for the former which depend on gift and endowment income for over a third of their operating funds.[163] Clearly, private institutions of higher education are beholden to their donors for their survival, a fact borne out by the seemingly ceaseless bombardment of their alumni with "development" materials from their alma maters.

Yet I sense that there is a serious disconnect between the message conveyed in the gift requests and the reality of where the solicited funds are eventually directed. If the previously cited estimate by Richard Vedder that only 21% of new money is used for student instruction—with the remainder used to support administrative overhead and research—there may be a "truth-in-advertising" issue with respect to the solicitation materials used by colleges and universities. The glossy magazines, newsletters, and direct appeals that they send to prospective donors are long on student benefits of donations and short on descriptions of where the remaining 79 % of every contributed dollar may wind up.

Much of the 79% will go to research, and it's true, as often acknowledged in this book, that institutions of higher education are about more than teaching, and in particular many take on the task of creating knowledge through research as well as passing it on in the classroom. But much of the worthwhile research that is trumpeted in university's development and public relations pronouncements is funded not by donors, but by the federal government and, increasingly, by business. What donors wind up financing is often "unfunded research," that which is specifically not funded by government or business in furtherance of some specific agenda or purpose, but rather funded by the school, and often in furtherance of little more than a professor's quest for tenure.

Even if Vedder's estimate of the amount of donor dollars that find their way to enhancing education is understated, I imagine anything less than 50% would still be a surprise to most donors. But having said that, I would hope the impulse of such donors, especially the donors representing large institutions, would be to reform the system rather than to abandon it. The counterparts of institutional donors in the corporate world are institutional shareholders, and those major investors—organizations such as CALPERS and TIAF-CREF and, more recently, hedge funds—have become increasingly effective in promoting long needed changes in corporate governance and focus. The major benefactors to higher education have the influence and economic leverage to do likewise.*

Foundations and other larger donors who share the central contention of this book—that students are paying too much for their education and receiving too little—can effect change by voting with their checkbook. Perhaps the simplest method of doing so is seeking out and supporting schools like Lindenwood where the student is the prime focus. But since such schools are rarities in today's landscape of higher education, a more forceful method would be tying gifts to educational initiatives. Requiring participation in, and positive results from, the before and after tests of the Council for Aid to Education as a condition of major funding could redirect collegiate resources to the classroom. Likewise, conditioning funding on cooperation with the National Survey of Student Engagement would give the donating institution a good feel for the commitment to education of the prospective donee. The only reason a college or university would not submit to a third party review and critique by the respon-

* According to tabulations by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, institutional donors, primarily foundations and corporations, accounted for over half of the charitable contributions to colleges and universities in 2004-2005. The remainder came from individuals, most of whom were alumni of the institution they contributed to. Erin Strout, "Private Giving to Colleges Is Up, but Fewer Alumni Make Donation," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 24, 2006.

sible organizations such as CAE and NSSE is if they were neglectful in their teaching efforts. And that is definitely something donors should find out prior to making their next contributions.

Besides the quality of education, prospective donors should ask about the quantity of education provided. A reasonable question might center on some relationship between the size of the gift and the numbers of students enrolled. Much is made nowadays about a widening gap between the haves and have-nots in America, but nowhere is that gap more apparent that in the pattern of giving to higher education. In order to determine a measure of that gap, I reviewed the market value of the endowment and the size of the student body at the twenty most well-endowed U.S. private universities.[164] Approximately 135,000 students attend those universities, representing only 2% of the estimated 6,750,000 traditional, full- time undergraduate students on the nation's campuses.[165] Yet the combined endowments of those twenty schools ($119 billion) account for 40% of the total endowments at institutions of higher education. The seven schools making up the Ivy League enroll far less than 1% of America's students, yet enjoy over 20% of total endowments.

The skewing of financial resources is not limited to the Ivy League. My own undergraduate alma mater, Washington University in St. Louis, may also illustrate how too much is dedicated to too few. The institution has become very rich in recent years, but seems to have little interest in spreading its wealth. At its website the school boasts that its 2005 freshman class totals 1,388 students, drawn from an applicant pool of 21,515. My freshman class, some 45 years ago, was only slightly smaller—and no doubt enrolled with a far less competitive process—yet the school's endowment has grown exponentially and now totals approximately $4.5 billion. And its reputation has grown accordingly, based in part on the *U.S. News* calculations of the amount of financial resources per student.

Yet one wonders why the foundations and wealthy individuals, whose dollars have swollen the endowments at Washington University and other rich schools, are not demanding that those dollars go further by increasing enrollment.

Among the tens of thousands of students Washington University rejects, there must be several hundred more who are as worthy and capable of benefiting from a college education from that institution as the 1,300 fortunate sons and daughters who get in each year. If Washington University and its peer institutions are unwilling to open up their gates to more qualified students, donors should consider spreading their contributions to institutions more intent on providing educational opportunity and less on attaining institutional prestige.

The wealthy schools are certainly wider in scope than the typical four-year institutions, and gifts to those schools are made with consideration given to research and other endeavors of a modern multiversity. Yet, at its core, the university, no matter how far-flung its mission, is about education, and the disparity between rich and poor seems unconscionably large.

A Special Challenge of Accountability for Lindenwood

Once, after I had finished describing Lindenwood's turnaround from the 1980s and its continued financial success thereafter, one of my former business colleagues remarked that he wished the university were a stock so he could buy it. And certainly if Lindenwood had a publicly traded common stock, an investment at the school's nadir in 1989 would have produced handsome returns. Lindenwood, of course, is a nonprofit, private institution, and its value is determined not by a market price, but rather by the quality of the education it provides for its students. "We succeed as our students succeed" is the institutional goal often stated by the school's administrators.

But with its financial future virtually assured, the next challenge for a self-proclaimed teaching institution like Lindenwood is to convince the larger community—a large part of which remains skeptical—that a university with Lindenwood's unorthodox management practices and disregard for much of what academia holds dear can deliver quality. It is one thing to abolish tenure, double the teaching duties of its faculty, and cut administrative costs to the bone in order to provide low tuition and fees for students; it is quite another to demonstrate convincingly that those very measures do not compromise the kind of education those students receive. It is easy to criticize the waste and nonsense that characterizes much of higher education; but Lindenwood has yet to prove that a radically different approach to modern college education pays off for the student.

My personal experience at Lindenwood gives me comfort that the educational product the institution delivers has great value. Contrary to the assertions of the higher education establishment, I believe that Lindenwood's heavy teaching schedule serves to sharpen teaching skills, and its laser-like focus on the student makes time in the classroom more effective. That belief is reinforced by student feedback. Like most schools, Lindenwood provides confidential questionnaires to all students at the conclusion of each course, asking them to evaluate the course and the instructor. Though the results defy common sense—like comedian Garrison Keillor's assessment that all of Lake Wobegon children are above average—Lindenwood's provost tells me that in the surveys students rank over 80% of their instructors as at least "above average."

Why the highly favorable ratings? Even though the evaluations are submitted anonymously, there may be some suspicion by students that professors somehow review the results before submitting grades. Or perhaps professors seek to curry student favor at evaluation time. The more likely reason for their enthusiastic response, however, is that students compare their Lindenwood classrooms with their secondary schools. Or, since a fairly high percentage of the university's students have transferred from another college or university, they may be comparing the Lindenwood classroom with the more impersonal, lecture hall format courses they took at other colleges or universities.

In addition to student evaluations, Lindenwood, like many other schools, has been evaluating educational "outcomes" through a more comprehensive assessment program. Such programs tend to take a before and after approach, in which student skills and knowledge are tested at the beginning of a course and at its completion. Responding to the assessment movement—and, in candor, to the most recent comprehensive evaluation by the university's accrediting agency—Lindenwood put a campus-wide system in place in which professors were asked to determine what its students actually learned in the course of a semester. The Higher Learning Commission proclaimed that there had been "significant progress in making academic assessment useful and widespread at Lindenwood." But in the view of this foot soldier, the assessments, which generally took the form of pre-tests and post-tests, did little to improve the school's already commendable teaching achievements. Countless meetings, reports, and tests have been produced to assess learning at Lindenwood, but in the end professors were asked to evaluate their teaching own success—with the predictable laudatory results.

Lindenwood has taken other, perhaps more objective, steps in demonstrating its confidence that its students receive a valuable education. In an age when employers are increasingly dismayed with the basic skills that accompany new college graduates, Lindenwood promises that its graduates will receive one of the most basic end-products of a college education: the ability to write correctly and clearly. As described on the inside cover of the undergraduate catalog, all Lindenwood students are required to take a special junior-level writing assessment administered to each student and a requirement for graduation.* The guarantee, of course, is less of a legal commitment and more of an institutional statement about the efficacy of its core liberal arts programs.

Still, Lindenwood, as a maverick within higher education, will need to do more. In an environment where an education is measured more by the institutional name on the diploma than by what its graduates know, the school needs to define success more tangibly than an allegiance to its mission statement. Lindenwood and other schools adopting the teaching university model will never achieve recognition under the terms of the existing criteria of the *U.S. News* rankings. Rather they will have to demonstrate through objectively administered reviews that quality teaching is taking place in the classroom. And they will have to show that their commitment to value-added bears fruit, by

* Students who need to "sharpen competencies in grammar, punctuation and syntax," (i.e. fail the test) are enrolled in additional writing classes.

comparing what students know when they arrive on campus at matriculation to what they leave with at commencement.

I have little fear that Lindenwood's students will always stack up well. In discussing what it takes to achieve educational quality, the authors of *Remaking the University*, wrote:

> Making quality job one means getting the most out of the resources you have. Quality means adding as much value as possible for enrolled students—transforming every student to the maximum extent possible given his or her talent and preparation. Quality means focusing on education as a primary institutional outcome, not an adjunct to knowledge creation. Quality means focusing on people as much as ideas.[166]

That passage nicely encapsulates the Lindenwood model. It describes the commitment and philosophy of the great majority of its faculty and staff that will work to the benefit of the university's graduates whenever and wherever they are judged, assessed, or tested. And, who knows, perhaps Lindenwood's efforts will one day have a wider effect, providing the impetus for much needed reforms in American undergraduate education.

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