



Public Universities as Academic Workplaces

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Public universities have long been central to the success of the national higher education enterprise, pursuing distinctive missions while responding to changing societal expectations to expand and diversify their functions. In recent years, however, a number of decision-makers and opinion-shapers—federal and state legislators, educational officials, citizens’ groups, and others—have generated external pressures on public universities, demanding reductions in cost, increased accountability, greater attention to undergraduate education, and wider scrutiny of faculty productivity. While these pressures have also affected private colleges and universities, cumulative pressure from the states on public universities has prompted the latter to search for new revenue sources and redesigned delivery systems. Within this political and economic climate, it is essential to consider how the challenges facing public universities today may fundamentally affect the lives of faculty within them. The importance of such a task is made clear when it is recalled that among the diverse institutional settings within which American faculty work, public universities employ the largest proportion of the U.S. academic profession of any sector in the higher education system.¹

For over a decade, interested observers have expressed concern that the post–World War II decades of academic opportunity, financial support, and public esteem for faculty have waned, making universities less desirable workplaces.² For the most part, observers have focused on the changing mix of expectations and resources for faculty, noting declining economic conditions and conflicting messages about how faculty should spend their time.

Contemporary discourse on the problems plaguing public higher education reaffirms these concerns, as academic organizations are criticized for their inherent inefficiency. Faculty are increasingly cast either as the problem—characterized as unproductive and self-interested—or as an obstacle to the solution, with norms for shared governance rendering faculty participation at best ineffective, at worst, obstructionist. The degree to which such unfavorable conceptions of faculty have become widespread is striking; so, too, is the extent to which a new style of academic management has simultaneously become more legitimate. Particularly in public universities, these two perceptions have become mutually reinforcing. The locus of control for decision-making is shifting away from departments and their faculties and toward various state-level actors and university spokespersons, who continually assert the need for even greater managerial flexibility to make a wide range of difficult resource allocation decisions, including those with educational implications.

This trend is significant because, among other reasons, it runs counter to the traditional expectations that faculty bring to their workplaces. Across fields of study, generations of academics have been socialized to expect the ideal of shared governance or, stated more pragmatically, the right to active participation or at least consultation in academic

decisions. Against this background, it seems inevitable that today's public universities will disappoint and that tomorrow's will ultimately disillusion both the faculty and those holding in view society's long-range investment in public universities. I share these concerns and accordingly use this essay as an opportunity to reflect on possible futures, fully aware that doing so is tantamount to proceeding along an untested limb that may duly be pruned in light of emerging case study and national data. These reflections are offered in the spirit of considering how public universities may be sustained as economically, organizationally, and intellectually viable and attractive places for academic work.

The approach used here will first provide a historical context by portraying in broad brush strokes the wider social forces that have reshaped the mission, finance, and governance of public universities. Against this backdrop, it will then be possible to examine how, in the contemporary climate, nonfaculty actors have been reshaping expectations for the conduct of faculty work in ways that are potentially detrimental to the intellectual environment of public universities.

Historical Precedents for Change and Lessons of Institution-Building

Faculty have not always been active participants in steering dramatic macro-level changes in the mission, finance, and governance of public universities. Rather, decades of institution-building have encompassed an interplay of social forces that encouraged public universities to adapt their missions alongside increasingly complex environmental demands and public expectations.³ Thus, any discussion of the changing character of public universities as academic workplaces must explain how the expansion and diversification of university functions have emerged from federal and state government initiatives that encouraged campus leaders to embrace new opportunities. While the inducement of federal and state funding has been critical in shaping how higher education institutions respond to changing societal needs, the enormous challenge of coordinating efforts by various federal, state, and campus actors has overshadowed the concomitant shifts in expectations for faculty work in those settings.

Federal Initiatives

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the national government's interest in higher education has been an enduring, formative presence in public colleges and universities, even though the states hold principal responsibility for them. This is especially true for public universities, which for the most part are chartered, financed, and governed as state entities.⁴ The federal government has on several occasions enacted legislation to support the expansion of the states' public higher education institutions and enrollments.

The earliest and most visible comprehensive federal initiative for public universities was the Morrill Act, passed in 1862.⁵ While the intrastate politics and institutional struggles that often underlaid land grant designation are worthy of detailed analysis in their own right, the Morrill Act had two specific consequences that shed light on how government initiatives have shaped public higher education. First, it contributed to an unprecedented diversification of the missions of public colleges and universities. Second, the act marked the creation of a symbolic and substantive national commitment to facilitate higher education's pursuit of a federally guided agenda. The distribution of federal financial resources to the states had three primary aims: democratization, to increase access to higher education; manpower training, to develop vocational/technical skills and liberal education; and applied research, to benefit the people of the states that built land grant institutions (and, by extension, the national interest).

Over the next several decades and well into the twentieth century, additional federal legislation extended the basic concept of the land grant idea. With World War II came the recognition of a need for highly trained personnel and the development of sophisticated technology for national defense. Higher education institutions positioned themselves as a suitable home for some portion of these activities. Sponsored research altered the very structures and mission of public universities, nurturing a growing interdependence between research, graduate education, and undergraduate education. Federal support became fuel for growth as funds were delivered through research (especially in science-oriented fields, and directed by mission-oriented agencies), as well as through emerging student- and institutional-aid mechanisms. The postwar surge of federal initiatives (such as the GI Bill, the National Defense Education Act of 1958, and the Higher Education Acts of 1963 and 1965) contributed to the further evolution of state institutions. Embracing the national interest in open access and expanded enrollments, even state teachers' colleges broadened their functions.

Relying on funds promoting democratization, work force training, and research, public university leaders and their growing faculties developed more extensive programs of undergraduate education and, in some institutions, expanded into graduate education and scientific research to seek competitive advantage across the disciplines. University leaders were encouraged by external actors to elaborate these commitments to institution-building. Clearly, public institutions depended upon public appropriations, and in turn the public expected these campuses to expand the scope of their activities into multipurpose institutions.

Concern Over the Locus of Control

Yet, even as national funds were essential to facilitate this expansion (and thus were welcomed by the states), universities and state governments alike were concerned that reliance on federal assistance might compromise the integrity or threaten the autonomy

of public universities.⁶ Was the federal government to be benevolent patron or demanding paymaster? Were public universities to adapt to whatever federal opportunities arose or to plan for and initiate reforms themselves? Could states establish unified planning and coordination of higher education or would they establish a system of decentralized budgeting, program review, and authority over university operations in which intrastate campuses would compete with one another? Would the federal government, the states, or the campuses determine public university missions, programs, and structures?

In spite of the acknowledged benefits of post–World War II expansion, waves of fiscal constraint hit all levels of the system by the mid-1970s. State and campus leaders became aware of the enormous revenues needed to support the huge institutional structures that had emerged—funding for research, for instrumentation and facilities, and for financial assistance to students. Deliberations about competing priorities and strategies for resource allocation in an uncertain economy dominated higher education policy arenas; this theme is echoed in discussions among state and campus leaders today. Increasingly concern was focused on the worry that the interest of the federal government in higher education appeared to be waning or was, at best, contingent. The solution for public universities was to develop a plurality of funding sources (including revenue from private sources) and to design strategies for directly contributing to economic development at the local, state, and national levels.⁷ Campus leaders constructed these activities as not only a legitimate extension of land grant purposes, but also as a prudent and even necessary approach to sustain the enterprise in a turbulent context.

Valuable Lessons

Institutional purposes evolved in tandem with external funding sources, and in retrospect, a number of valuable lessons have become clear. In over a century of public university institution-building, substantial changes in mission, finance, and governance practices in turn had changed the organization of academic work and authority, leading primarily to the predominance of academic stratification and bureaucratic coordination. This relationship between changing institutional purposes, work environments, and expectations for faculty members foreshadowed the dramatic expansion in the range of faculty roles and workplace experiences in the contemporary era. As such, the lessons linking institutional purposes and the university-as-workplace over a hundred years demand careful consideration.

The first lesson is that federal higher education initiatives and priority-setting at the macro level have made an enormous difference to public universities and the faculty within them. The federal government has decisively stimulated the extent and nature of state commitments to higher education. Incrementally and without centralized coordination, new and diverse initiatives increasing the availability of public funds

expanded the revenue base for universities—while at the same time creating future dependence on, and institutional vulnerability to, resources beyond state appropriations. As campuses sought to evolve from a primary mission of instruction into “federal grant universities,”⁸ their reliance on federal funds both to fuel academic R&D imperatives and sustain student financial assistance was a dominant concern. Public universities continue to find themselves vulnerable to changes in levels of federal funding for higher education, to say nothing of indirect funding shifts that have been passed down to the state level (such as health care and social services), and thus compete with higher education for state appropriations.

A second and equally sobering lesson is that over the past few decades concerns about institutional autonomy have shifted from worry about a domineering federal presence to more explicit tensions between public universities and their state governments. State governments have, of course, had a dominant presence in funding and coordinating the work of public universities. This presence is constitutionally derived and legitimated as a necessary safeguard of the public interest. States have granted to academic institutions varying degrees of substantive autonomy to determine their institutional goals and procedural autonomy to designate the means by which institutions will pursue such goals.⁹ As states recognized that the unchecked expansion of missions and programs of the heady post–World War II years might not be in their best interests, statewide coordination efforts sought the voluntary cooperation of higher education institutions. An elaborate set of structural mechanisms—from academic program approval and program review to central purchasing, line-item budgets, and pre-audits of expenditures—mediated between public institutions and their state legislatures.¹⁰ However, these statewide coordination mechanisms opened the door to attempts by a number of state agencies to control and consolidate academic programs in the 1980s and early 1990s.

A third lesson focuses on the diverse institutional settings that emerged for public higher education. As external initiatives prompted mission differentiation, campuses took on different primary functions and resources such that the public sector came to include flagship research universities and doctoral degree–granting institutions, comprehensive state colleges and universities, and community colleges. Unquestionably, variation in public universities as academic workplaces to some extent parallels mission differentiation. At elite public universities the expectation is for faculty to engage in a mix of undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral instruction as well as research, while at state colleges and universities the expectation is for primarily undergraduate and master’s instruction. This general characterization gives way, however, when we look more closely at the faculty in each of those settings; it is not necessarily the case that the segmented market for public higher education is characterized by parallel differences in faculty goals, work styles, authority, and attitudes.¹¹ This is due in part to the profes-

sional socialization for teaching and research imprinted upon faculty members from their doctoral education. As new generations of faculty carry their Ph.D.s to nonelite institutional settings, they may bring a wider range of professional aspirations than is expected—or appropriate—in their academic workplace. Thus, while the public sector is highly differentiated by mission, faculty orientations in those settings may be highly diverse as well.

A fourth lesson to be drawn from this historical overview of institution-building is a marked distinction between “haves” and “have-nots.” The competition for resources and status has reinforced academic stratification on several levels. In the push for competitive advancement, not only have public institutions been ranked relative to one another, but it has become commonplace to have rankings within any given university campus. Academic units have become characterized for their value as differential assets in the quest for institutional upward mobility, in particular for their revenue-generating capabilities.¹² Although universities have long claimed to have comprehensive coverage across academic fields, on any given campus there are distinctive programmatic strengths that enhance its reputation and position with respect to competitive markets—be they for students, for faculty, or for research. As public funding fluctuated, it quickly became apparent that the revenue-generating capability of a unit can serve as a valuable corrective. Since resource differences across academic departments have in part been compensated for by cross-subsidization, the potential for a program to raise revenue for the entire institution adds another factor in deliberations over which academic programs are most central to university missions.

A final lesson concerns the evolution of shared authority—the drift of authority upward, especially in large public systems, and the tension between managerial and academic temperaments.¹³ The ideal of interdependence among faculty and administrators is historically rooted in the need for effective coordination of an increasingly complex organization. The rationale for mixing professional and bureaucratic authority grew out of two major changes in the nature of academic work: the specialization of faculty, and the rise of bureaucratic coordination. The growing ranks of faculty became increasingly specialized, such that their primary expertise as educators was located in departmentally based domains of curriculum, instruction, peer review, and research. Faculty asserted their professional autonomy by controlling standards for entrance and promotion, as well as standards of work. Faculty participated in a variety of governing structures, such as committees and the academic senate. To compensate for the faculty’s specialization and the segmentation of academic work, administrative positions were established to centralize key functions of fiscal oversight, establish standardization across units, and link the university with (or buffer it from) external actors. Effective sharing of authority between faculty and administrators rested on a key premise of shared goals and values, a premise increasingly tested as collective bargaining by fac-

ulty became visible in public higher education in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. Although faculty in elite public universities tended to see unions as inappropriate to their situation, faculty at other levels of public higher education tended to look more favorably at collective bargaining arrangements for their potential to safeguard job security and the terms of academic work.

These complex arrangements for sharing authority have been further complicated by the expanding managerial presence of nonacademic administrators. Particularly in the past twenty-five years, these figures have become increasingly visible both in sheer numbers and in expenditures for their functions, even as higher education has entered an era of selective investment after the seemingly limitless first century of planning for growth.¹⁴ Responding to uncertain economic and political climates as well as to state-level demands for cost containment and efficiency, these administrators have come to assume a central mediating role. Their functions have been both to read the environment and to position the institution and its programs amidst changing enrollment projections, anticipated state allocations, and changing academic markets for research and economic development. A growing tension has ensued, however, as this evolving jurisdiction reflects an intermingling of budgetary and academic matters. Moreover, if specific circumstances of the day were construed as a crisis, traditional academic governance structures could be (and have been) legitimately bypassed in favor of swift, centralized decision-making. Increasingly, this maneuver has come to be a celebrated alternative to faculty participation and existing governance arrangements, presumed to be too time-consuming or inescapably tainted by self-interest. Thus, decision-making affecting even the academic domain has moved out of departments, as all-important resource allocation and restructuring decisions have come to be made by university administrators and external (state-level) actors. The increased centrality of these actors can in part be accounted for as a necessary organizational adaptation in which managerialism filled a vacuum of inactivity that stemmed from faculty specialization and the segmentation of academic work.

Contemporary Challenges and University Responses

Further evidence has accumulated in the past few decades that these early lessons retain significance for today's public universities as academic workplaces. External pressures are demanding shifts of emphasis within an already wide-ranging set of institutional commitments, rather than taking on new purposes. Public universities are today beset by persistent vulnerability, as their legitimacy and even their means of operation still depend upon political and economic resources from the wider environment. Responding to an array of challenges that have been at times contradictory as well as expensive, university managers and their governing boards have attempted to respond to shifting demands in ways that have tangible consequences for the context and conduct of faculty work.

Before describing those consequences, though, we must first consider three interrelated yet distinct features that have become prominent in this contemporary landscape. The first is decidedly economic. For nearly three decades, public universities have faced a mix of financial concerns, including unpredictable funding fluctuations from major revenue sources, unfavorable economic conditions (e.g., inflation, recession), operating costs increasing faster than inflation, and intensifying admonishments from students, parents, and legislatures to control costs. Within the past decade the biggest unanticipated hit came from state budgets, as appropriations fell substantially below budget projections that campus leaders had relied upon in the prior two decades of strategic planning. The gap between budget projections and financial realities heightened the economic pressure on public universities.¹⁵ The reasons underlying reductions in state funds to higher education are many; they include recession in state economies and the devolution of federal programs, especially medical-services programs, to state and local governments. As states wrestle with a new mix of competing budgetary priorities, financial reductions to public universities have been justified to the wider public for their reputed impact of making these institutions more accountable.

Interestingly, the shortfall in state appropriations to public higher education was not accompanied by a reduction in state involvement in determining university purposes and practices. Across the country, many public universities have received clear messages to heed new market signals. They have been told, by means of legislation and exhortation, to prepare for undergraduate enrollment increases in the coming decades; to improve access; to enhance the quality of undergraduate education; to offer academic programs that will better match employment opportunities and expectations; and to offer demonstrable progress in institutional performance, including cost-effectiveness, the assessment of student learning, and faculty productivity. The tenor of these demands has been characterized by an insistence on two guiding principles. The first is that the university cannot and should not be buffered from the market; it will not be permitted to shield vestiges of inefficiency and irrelevance once protected by the trump of academic autonomy. The second is to view functioning like a business in a competitive context as the one acceptable avenue toward self-improvement. Taken together these two principles may be seen as a political challenge, under the pressure of which public universities and their faculties have themselves become “in play” in the political arena. In today’s climate, they must prove themselves entities worthy of continued investment according to new measures of effectiveness. Against this shared backdrop, public institutions have varying degrees of political clout to withstand state legislative pressure; while alumni loyalty may help cushion some campuses, others do not have that currency to draw upon.

These economic and political features of the contemporary landscape are conjoined in a third dynamic—the expectation that public universities will raise their own revenue through tuition and fees, sponsored research funds, auxiliary enterprises, fund-raising,

collaboration with industry, and so on. Given this expectation, faculty work comes to be viewed as an institutional resource that can be assessed in terms of the extent to which it contributes to improved institutional performance along such dimensions.

Indeed, public universities are seeking a plurality of funding sources now more than ever. At the same time, acknowledging the financial impossibility of pursuing all things equally well, they have had to question whether they can afford to try to be all things to all people. For example, it is a formidable challenge to lower costs while simultaneously improving access to and the quality of undergraduate education, while still competing for national R&D funds. Working together with their governing boards, university managers have coped with this mix of institutional pressures by devising cost-cutting initiatives alongside a series of revenue-generating strategies. These have run the gamut from salary freezes and hiring freezes to early-retirement incentive programs; dramatic tuition increases (along with policies for high tuition/high aid); not filling faculty vacancies; reducing and contracting out selected services; consolidating and closing academic programs; cutting expenditures on libraries, maintenance, and instructional equipment; mounting aggressive campaigns for private fund-raising; restating the institution's record of public service to the state; and innumerable instances of administrative and academic restructuring in response to general and specific legislative mandates.¹⁶

Among the more visible and controversial practices, three initiatives by the University of California in the mid-1990s exemplify the potential of such cost-cutting and revenue-generating strategies to reshape the character of public universities: early-retirement incentives, differential tuition, and contracting out (or "outsourcing") certain academic programs. Thousands of professors (approximately two thousand "ladder" faculty) at the University of California chose to retire early in three waves of such voluntary retirement programs. While the full consequences are as yet unclear, it is already evident that some departments on University of California campuses were affected by losses in at least two areas: the large number of vacancies left to be filled on an ad hoc basis, and the loss of senior faculty with years of institutional memory. A second initiative saw the establishment of fee surcharges for selected professional schools. As a supplement to regular fees, the professional school fee surcharge opens the way for charging differential fees in other programs throughout the university. Such fees would presumably be set based on proximity to markets for human capital development; their existence could greatly reduce cross-subsidization by allowing selected schools to retain the additional fee income. The third initiative has been the selective outsourcing of academic programs. As a move toward cost-effectiveness, the University of California has proposed to disestablish and outsource selected academic programs to extension and community colleges. Thus far introductory Spanish has been proposed for such a move, and other elementary language courses, along with elementary levels of mathematics and writing,

have been considered. The thrust of the idea is to export courses off-campus to achieve cost savings and streamline administrative operations. At a deeper level, of course, initiatives to outsource selected academic programs illuminate changing beliefs about what a university ought to look like, calling into question the appropriateness of private-sector models of adaptation for higher education.

Expectations for Faculty Work

As public universities respond to these contemporary economic and political challenges, changes in institutional practices directly alter the expectations of faculty work. The revised expectations, which come from a mix of initiatives by legislative bodies, statewide coordinating boards, governing boards, and university leaders, are intended not only to raise revenue but, at a deeper level, to rethink the very purpose of public universities—envisioning them now, in other words, as delivery systems. Seeing public higher education in this way brings three themes to the fore.

One prominent theme is the directive from state legislatures to improve undergraduate education, which has been translated into a directive to spend more time on undergraduate teaching. This directive comes in the context of a national emphasis on “putting students first.”¹⁷ In some public universities, teaching loads have been increased, small graduate programs have been closed, and faculty have been told not to spend too much time with graduate students.¹⁸ In other public universities, faculty are told to recommit their time and attention to undergraduates while simultaneously being urged to actively pursue government research grants and university-industry collaboration. The emphasis on undergraduate education raises the question of whether merit pay criteria or promotion and tenure criteria will be revised correspondingly. Moreover, while this orientation is part of an organizational approach to “redeploy faculty resources,” there are significant and at times painful trade-offs in making this shift.

A second and related theme is the expectation that some means of assessing faculty performance and productivity will be established. Such procedures have been developed in the context of demonstrating institutional performance and productivity, with new means to document teaching (e.g., evaluations, portfolios, peer review) for annual reviews. Numerous additional mechanisms are used to assess contributions to both undergraduate education and research, and the bureaucracy is poised to assemble data, from student credit hours by faculty and department to publication activity and research grant awards. Of course, that which is quantifiable is preferable to those who keep and analyze such centralized data. To date, the several types of data have not been considered equally in promotion and tenure decisions, which rely more heavily on national, peer-reviewed assessments of productivity rather than local reputations. This chasm between expectations and rewards is striking.

A third theme shaping the new expectations of faculty work is the ability to justify academic programs on the basis of their contributions to the state's economic development, a function that is increasingly regarded as falling within the university's service mission. On many campuses, academic program review is now a regular exercise; even if a unit is not undergoing program review at a given moment, evidence demonstrating how the program or the faculty member contributes to the state's economy is encouraged, if not expected.¹⁹ When the time comes for selective reinvestment among academic programs, the close-to-the-market programs appear to be thriving, while those programs that appear less relevant are weakened.²⁰ At the same time, public universities are asked to search out and serve a new clientele: adult learners, those in the workplace, and those at a distance. A restratification of academic programs is emerging in this light, laden with implications for intensifying differential status within the faculty.

The cumulative effect on faculty of these shifts in the academic workplace is substantial. A strong case could be made that the absence of faculty input into these revised expectations is appropriate. It is entirely possible that faculty did not want to deal with such issues, preferring the administration to act as a buffer while faculty engage in their core academic functions and students study, leaving managers to respond to the challenges rather than mobilizing the entire campus community for input. However, as university managers and governing boards have been at the forefront of responding to contemporary challenges and repositioning their institutions, these nonfaculty actors have also taken on the role of speaking for the institution in discussions of how much time faculty should teach, what and how faculty should teach, and how administrators can enhance faculty teaching. Whether by design or by default, traditional faculty governance structures have been bypassed in formulating these expectations, prompting us to consider how faculty have come to be characterized in the academic workplace.

Conceptions of Faculty at Work

The cumulative effect of these challenges is a substantial reconceptualization of faculty work—indeed of faculty obligations—by management. Faculty have been constructed as a significant management challenge. Seen in quite new ways, faculty are employees, potential revenue sources, resources to be redeployed, and competitors rather than colleagues.

As public universities have been pressured to become more like businesses, university managers have become the major reshapers of the academic workplace. If administrators have become managers and spokespersons for the institution, faculty have become more like employees in a setting that emphasizes the need to meet performance expectations.²¹ Faculty are not exempt from being given revised or additional workloads, or

from being told how to spend their time (teaching or research, teaching undergraduates or graduate students) and which programs to devote their energy to. Annual performance reviews for all ranks of faculty document how faculty spend time and what they produce. The new style of academic management regards the notion of a professionally self-regulating and autonomous faculty, if it ever existed, as no longer affordable, let alone appropriate, for state employees. In addition to the evaluation of teaching performance, there is a more comprehensive surveillance of academic work, including requests from campus administration to report office hours, consulting activities, and time spent out of town. If faculty are employees, an interesting question is raised—for whom do they work? The administration, the state, their students, the public? In any case, this approach treats faculty as workers who need to be monitored rather than as professionals who are trusted to work according to internalized standards.²²

In addition to treating faculty more like employees, such an approach holds that faculty contributions can be measured in terms of the revenue they generate. In an instrumentalist approach, faculty work can be divided into measurable components with demonstrable production. As data on individuals are aggregated to the departmental level, faculty members can be accounted for by such measures as number of courses taught, student credit hours per term, research dollars brought in, and publications produced. Of course, these dimensions are valued differently across campuses within the public university sector, as faculty in lower-prestige settings earn their keep through student full-time equivalents (FTEs), while faculty in flagships earn their keep through grant-getting and publication activities. Within this performance paradigm, institutional service (such as committee work) and community service (such as promoting town-gown relationships) have been devalued as a way for tenured faculty to spend their time—and have thus been deemed to be something from which nontenured faculty should be protected. As this set of criteria is gaining currency, it is possible that the domain of faculty work will expand to reflect new sources of revenue. On the horizon, in addition to the technology-transfer activities in which knowledge is applied for economic development in local, regional, and state needs, new markets are emerging for intellectual property for teaching (e.g., courseware, videos for distance education.)²³ Whether this arena of potential revenue will benefit the individual faculty member or the institution will likely be determined through negotiations between faculty and those administrators whose duties have come to include knowledge management.

Along with the performance-assessment approach, the new academic management paradigm regards faculty as competitors rather than colleagues. The organization and its workers are seen as atomistic—reduced to a set of discrete operating units that have expenditures and revenues as well as production (e.g., student FTEs, degrees awarded), thus opening a unit's performance to cost-benefit analyses. Departments are units that spend and raise funds within fiscal constraints and are thus liabilities or assets for the organizational balance sheet. There is not much room here for the notion of a scholarly

community. As mentioned earlier, stratification among academic units is not new. However, today's stratification further challenges a sense of the organization as a collectivity. In addition to eroding the ethos of a campus as an academic community or the faculty as a scholarly community, the atomistic approach incidentally works against the likelihood that faculty will perceive themselves as employees with a shared interest, which is the basis of solidarity in collective bargaining.

It is no surprise that the division of academic labor among faculty reflects not only different types of work but also what has come to be differently valued and differently compensated work. As university managers have applied the ideas of "theorists" like Drucker and Champy—with their attendant prescriptions for reengineering—organizational units and their employees have come to be seen as resources to be rearranged, downsized, or otherwise streamlined in the name of efficiency and repositioning the organization for survival. Practices of cross-subsidization that were once taken for granted are jeopardized in the more competitive ethos—even as unit leaders engage in a tug-of-war to retain revenue from fee income or research overhead and managers seek to protect their all-important discretionary resources. Dominant concerns of actors in the organization become guarding concentrations of capital, worrying about bigger salary differences across and even within academic units, and protecting programs from being dismantled or outsourced. In this context, it is difficult to keep central the notion that we are engaged in an educational enterprise. Moreover, if faculty were characterized as unduly individualistic before this climate, such a climate will surely exacerbate a survival-of-the-fittest orientation.

Finally, a key consequence for faculty is that they are considered resources that need to be redeployed for the institution to improve its delivery of educational services. Facing competitive pressures, flexibility in organizational redesign is paramount. A well-known fact of academic organizations is that the bulk of resources is intractable, since it resides in faculty salaries. Seen from this perspective, inflexibility is cemented by tenure—the ultimate buffer from the market. It is not surprising that there is now widespread discussion of eliminating and/or creating alternatives to tenure. Of course, scrutiny of tenure may not be explicitly stated as distrust (i.e., that tenure serves as a cloak for incompetence); instead, it is rooted in a managerial paradigm that seeks the flexibility to shift resources in response to short-term demands. The preferred approach to faculty hiring becomes one of filling vacancies with part-time faculty. As retirements occur, we are apt to see a greater proportion of part-time faculty, thus shifting a substantial proportion of the teaching function to another layer of academic personnel.

In addition to creating more of a disparity between the academic "haves" and "have-nots," this shift has implications for governance: Will part-time faculty have greater involvement as organizational members? Or, conversely, will the ranks of faculty who

can participate in faculty governance over time be diminished—thereby leaving more decision-making power in the hands of full-time administrators? In either case, at the risk of stating the obvious, “redeployment” of faculty resources may invoke a visceral objection, offending the academic sensibility with this military imagery. Although uncomfortable, it is nonetheless necessary to consider this as a change over time in the nature of faculty recruitment. Perhaps a different analogy can illuminate the shift: Formerly managed like a zoo, the organization sought to add new exhibits. When a lion died, the tendency was to replace it with another lion. In the past few decades, with reduced availability of resources with which to purchase distinctiveness, a vacancy signaled the opportunity to use those resources to obtain an exotic beast, a star who could enhance the organization’s reputation. The increased reliance on part-timers signals a shift: rather than establish permanent exhibits, the zoo becomes dominated by short-term appearances of various rare and not-so-rare animals that can capture the interest of zoo visitors and yet be quickly dismantled by zookeepers and owners when interest dwindles. In the name of flexibility, this use of resources is not inherently bad for business; whether it is appropriate for public universities is another matter.

Conclusion

This essay has reflected on public universities as academic workplaces. As institutional purposes have evolved alongside external demands, so have expectations for faculty work. In the contemporary era, faculty have come to be understood as a management challenge, rather than as professionals who are integral to the reshaping of the enterprise. Focusing on public universities, the contention here is that the end of the twentieth century is a defining moment in which the character of the enterprise will be reshaped. It is no longer reasonable to assume that universities will sustain their commitments to comprehensive field coverage regardless of a department’s demonstrated relevance and revenue-generating potential. No longer able to succeed by means of additive or steady-state solutions, public universities are responding to external pressures to shift concentrations of resources and capital. Nonfaculty actors are at the forefront of critical decisions about what will be eliminated and what will be protected, as well as the basis on which these decisions will be made. I suggest that faculty not only have a right to participate in this reshaping, they have a responsibility to do so. Failure to participate will not stop the process; it will only render them outside of the process.

When I reflect on my choice to become a faculty member, I hear a faint echo that faculty are the heart and soul of an institution. If this is still the case, I wonder what kind of heart and soul the institution of tomorrow will have. Who will the faculty be? Who will make the critical academic decisions? What contexts will foster academic work such that faculty can educate and nurture future generations of citizens, workers, schol-

ars, and ideas? Short-term adaptations may prove to be short-sighted, jeopardizing what is in the long-term public interest. I worry that faculty are missing an opportunity to involve themselves in this crucial discussion among those who claim to speak for the public interest.

In this political and economic climate, institutional autonomy and professional autonomy vis-à-vis self-governance have been recast as a luxury that public universities cannot afford. This is a profound change in stance. Autonomy in the past was a professional obligation, one that was tied to high ideals—a trust in academic expertise, a commitment to disinterested inquiry, as well as a point of departure for fresh thinking about that which is not currently valued. Will those ideals simply be dismissed as mythical, nostalgic, or an entitlement for the few? Must faculty entirely abandon the notion of being buffered from the market? Will faculty internalize a conception of themselves as employees, competitors, revenue-generators, and redeployable resources? And what educational consequences will result?

If faculty in public universities want the privilege of mulling over their ideas for teaching, of reading and writing, will they have to remove themselves from their workplaces to get it? Will the preferred route be to take themselves out of those institutional settings, and will this reflect a further differentiation between “haves” and “have-nots”? Will the academic labor force become increasingly segmented within larger economic and political structures such that only an elite few can claim alignment with that academic calling? Even within the public university sector, we are likely to see differences. Higher-prestige campuses, especially the state flagships, generally have more political clout, due to alumni loyalty, with which to withstand state legislative intervention, while lower-prestige institutions do not.

Faculty must realize that the contemporary arena of institutional repositioning is at least as much about political positioning between competing interest groups, both within and outside their workplaces. To speak of mutual trust and cooperation is pie-in-the-sky thinking. Perhaps faculty should be delighted that the public still views higher education as a key to the future, as a means of individual upward mobility, providing socialization and citizenship as well as work force training and economic development. But given that public interest comes with scrutiny and demands for accountability, it is incumbent upon the faculty to insert themselves into the conversation and do a better job of explaining what they do.²⁴

Obviously, many questions remain to be answered about the future of the American academic profession and the future of public universities. In examining the nexus of these two turbulent areas, I yearn for surer footing. Perhaps faculty themselves can provide some of that. My hope is that faculty, together with their administrative

spokespeople, can make the case that there is something worth preserving that is being rendered obsolete by today's managerial paradigm and performance metric. I am not making a case to preserve academic ideals that now seem nostalgic, nor am I calling for faculty participation in a way that is tantamount to making a case for waste, which would be politically indefensible and imprudent in tough economic times. My call is simple and timely. I want faculty to listen to external pressures but to be ardent in their advocacy of intangible but essential values. The public university has immeasurable societal values; it nurtures people and their ideas. Faculty, who have expertise in academic matters, must not be silenced. Otherwise they may one day soon find themselves in a very different institution, or perhaps even outside it altogether.

Endnotes

1. In order to draw some parameters for this essay I focus on public universities, which make up twelve percent of U.S. institutions of higher, enroll thirty-five percent of the students, and employ approximately fifty percent of the half-million U.S. faculty. My reflections are not intended to describe the broader population of public institutions that extends to two-year and baccalaureate-only-granting colleges, although I do want to note that the broader sector employs seventy percent of U.S. faculty, about forty percent of whom are unionized. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *A Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* (Princeton, N.J.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1994); U.S. Department of Education, "Faculty and Instructional Staff," Washington, D.C., fall 1992; and Dan Julius, ed., *Managing the Industrial Labor Relations Process in Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1995).

2. See, for example, Ann Austin and Zelda Gamson, *Academic Workplace: New Tensions, Heightened Demands*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report No. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1983); Philip Altbach, Robert Berdahl, and Patricia Gumpert, *Higher Education in American Society*, 3d ed. (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1994); Robert Blackburn and Janet Lawrence, *Faculty at Work: Motivation, Expectation, Satisfaction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); James Fairweather, *Faculty Work and Public Trust* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1996).

3. See Burton Clark's insightful account of system evolution in "The Problem of Complexity in Modern Higher Education," in *The European and American University Since 1800*, edited by S. Rothblatt and B. Wittrock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For an account of the contemporary scene, see Patricia Gumpert and Brian Pusser, "Restructuring the Academic Environment," in *Planning and Management for a Changing Environment*, edited by M. Peterson, D. Dill, and L. Mets (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

4. As exceptions, public universities in California and Michigan have constitutional autonomy that empowers their Boards of Regents to a greater extent than governing boards in other states.

5. The Morrill Act stipulated that public lands (30,000 acres) be apportioned for sale by the states, with the proceeds used to promote higher education for the industrial classes, thus making the Morrill Act instrumental in establishing land grant institutions in each state. Between 1862 and 1970, thirty-seven states developed land grant universities. These were either existing state institutions that adapted their missions or entirely new institutions. Some historians have argued that although the Morrill Act was clearly a sign of national commitment to higher education, it originated and gained momentum from grass roots constituencies of industrial and agricultural interests, especially those

located in the northeast. Roger Williams, *The Origins of Federal Support for Higher Education* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

6. Concern over the uneasy partnership was articulated by Robert Berdahl in his landmark book *Statewide Coordination of Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1971). Berdahl advised that state planners be astute in coordination and incorporation of federal assistance, so that they not simply follow federal financial inducements when the best interests of the state would have dictated otherwise. A similar concern was expressed by Babbidge and Rosenzweig in wondering if the federal government was “including States or institutions to do what it wanted,” or whether federal assistance was there “to help States and institutions do better or more of that which they are already doing, or to help them do at all that they would like to do but cannot afford to do.” Homer Babbidge and Robert Rosenzweig, *The Federal Interest in Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962).

7. For a critical examination of the rationale that higher education should be supported for its contributions to economic development, see Sheila Slaughter, “From Serving Students to Serving the Economy: Changing Expectations of Faculty Role Performance,” *Higher Education* 14, no. 1 (February 1985): 41-56; Sheila Slaughter and Edward Silva, “Towards a Political Economy of Retrenchment: The American Public Research Universities,” *Review of Higher Education* 8 (1985): 295-318; and Henry Etzkowitz, “Entrepreneurial Scientists and Entrepreneurial Universities in American Academic Science,” *Minerva* 21, no. 2/3 (1983): 198-233.

8. The phrase was coined by Clark Kerr in his 1963 classic. Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University*. 3d ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

9. Berdahl, *Statewide Coordination* .

10. See Lyman Glenny, *Autonomy of Public Colleges: The Challenge of Coordination* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959). In *Statewide Coordination*, 13, Berdahl foreshadowed the likelihood that the state role would change. At the time, he characterized it this way: “. . . given the current need for expansion of both the number and types of programs, the probable state role is that of traffic cop for new programs rather than destroyer of existing ones. Of course, there is always the danger that, under conditions like those in the depression-ridden 1930s, states may again react by forcing severe cutbacks in current programs.” Even in the 1990s Berdahl retained a cautious watch, noting that state coordination bodies have not yet reached the partnership potential he had foreseen for them two decades earlier. “Public Universities and State Governments: Is the Tension Benign?” *Educational Record* 71, no.1 (Winter 1990): 38-42.

11. This point is nicely developed in Kenneth Ruscio’s chapter, “Many Sectors, Many Professions,” in *The Academic Profession* , edited by Burton Clark (Berkeley and Los

Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987). In reference to Gouldner's classic distinction, Ruscio argues that cosmopolitan as opposed to local orientations are not so neatly evident today. Alvin Gouldner, "Cosmopolitans and Locals: Toward an Analysis of Latent Social Roles," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 2 (March 1958): 281-306.

12. Patricia Gumport, "The Contested Terrain of Academic Program Reduction," *Journal of Higher Education* 64, no.3 (May/June 1993): 283-311.

13. See Burton Clark, *The Higher Education System* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1983); and Ruscio, "Many Sectors, Many Professions."

14. Patricia Gumport and Brian Pusser, "A Case of Bureaucratic Accretion: Context and Consequences," *Journal of Higher Education* 66, no.5 (September/October 1995): 493-520.

15. It is ironic that demands have increased in the face of reduced funding to the point that public universities are increasingly characterized as "state-assisted" rather than "state-supported" institutions. National data on declining state appropriations reveal that between 1980 and 1993 state funding for public universities and colleges fell just under ten percent. For annual updates of funding changes, see the annual *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS Finance Surveys.

16. Public higher education has been directed to restructure administratively and academically, with general mandates in states such as Arizona and Florida, while a more specific legislative mandate to restructure occurred in Virginia in 1994. See Terrence MacTaggart and associates' work on restructuring governing systems in North Dakota, Massachusetts, Alaska, Minnesota and Maryland in Terrence J. MacTaggart, *Restructuring Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

17. For example, see the report by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities, "Returning to Our Roots: The Student Experience," April 1997.

18. In response to a restructuring mandate and uniform guidelines in a 1994 General Assembly Act as well as the criteria given by the State Council on Higher Education in Virginia, restructuring at the University of Virginia exemplifies some of these changes; faculty across all departments are expected to be more productive, a message expressed even more precisely as, "The faculty, with 1,500 more students to teach, will have to be 13 percent more productive," in *Targeting Excellence: A Tracking Report* (1995). The report also explains that faculty members whose research funding and interest have declined have been assigned additional courses; and in one department (history) all faculty now serve as undergraduate advisors. At the same time, faculty across all departments face new performance evaluation procedures, with a mandate that teaching

be considered in the annual review of each faculty member. Accompanying this discussion of how to ensure that faculty teach more undergraduates and teach them better is an admonishment that graduate students should not consume a disproportionate share of faculty time. In an interesting note of irony, the progress report states that some 20,000 hours of faculty, staff, and student time went into the yearlong effort to prepare the report.

19. Examples abound of department-based efforts in the face of being targeted for elimination, such as at the University of Oregon in the early 1990s, as well as institution-wide efforts to do so in 1997. See *Partnership Illinois* by the University of Illinois and *Partners for Progress* by the North Dakota State University System.

20. See Sheila Slaughter, "Retrenchment in the 1980s: The Politics of Prestige and Gender," *Journal of Higher Education* 64, no.3 (May/June 1993): 250-282; Sheila Slaughter, "Criteria for Restructuring Postsecondary Education," *Journal for Higher Education Management* 10, no.2 (Winter/Spring 1995): 31-44; and Sheila Slaughter and Larry Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

21. Of historical import on the conception of faculty as employees or managers, it is crucial to note that the Supreme Court ruled faculty positions as managerial in the *Yeshiva* decision. In spite of this ruling, faculty have gained bargaining status in public colleges and universities as employees. Of course, it should also be noted that employees can be highly professionalized, as is evident with musicians, dancers, and others organized according to more of a crafts-union analogy. See Julius, ed., *Managing the Industrial Labor Relations Process in Higher Education*. Of related interest, within a workplace model that sees administrators as managers and faculty as workers, students become mere consumers.

22. Of course, this may be part of a broader societal trend in which a logic of accountability is imposed on other progressions as well. See the argument offered by Gary Rhoades, *Managed Professionals: Unionization and Restructuring Academic Labor* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998).

23. Patricia Gumport and Marc Chun, "Technology and Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges for the New Era," in *American Higher Education in the 21st Century: Social, Political, and Economic Challenges*, edited by Philip Altbach, Robert Berdahl, and Patricia Gumport (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming).

24. See Levine's compelling editorial on this point. Arthur Levine, "Higher Education's New Statues as a Mature Industry." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 31 January 1997.