

# New Universities, New Possibilities: Higher Education in Western Canada

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New universities, new possibilities: Higher Education in Western Canada

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Discussion concerning innovation in higher education is widespread, and has generated an increasing number of books and papers questioning the quality and value of the modern university. Implicit in much of this discussion is a concern about undergraduate education, and how we are not doing a very good job. The literature is voluminous, and the perspectives many and varied.

They all, however, seem to add up to the same thing: we need to get serious about change, we need to get past the entrenched attitudes that sustain universities, and we need to keep in mind what is good for our students and worry less about what is best for faculty. This is not to say that our universities are doing a bad job. While there is much evidence to the contrary, and it is important not to forget the many outstanding things universities do, it is also the case that vested interests often taken priority over students and leave universities vulnerable to criticism. After all, how often must we hear that faculty do not have time for their “own” work as if teaching is not? For most people, and especially parents, universities are primarily teaching institutions. This is what parents want, and they want it to be an outstanding experience for their kids.

The context for this essay is entirely personal. Having worked in higher education for over forty years, thirty of them in academic administration, and twenty as President of four very different Canadian universities, I have been afforded a historic perspective about how universities have changed and how they have resisted change. From this, some things are clear: universities have always been fluid, dynamic institutions, the debate about identity has long been with us, and concerns about sustainability and purpose have been consistently top of mind. In this context, a group of new universities in western Canada suggests possibilities for a different way of doing things. Created specifically to provide a less expensive university option, while maintaining a single-minded commitment to teaching, these universities represent substantial promise. The question is are they sustainable given the many forces imposed on them to become like every other university. In this regard they become a test case for whether change is really possible.

It was Kant, who in talking about the private and public use of reason anticipated the variable ambitions of universities, a distinction subsequently picked up by Hegel who distinguished between classical literary education and technical learning. Ever since, we have debated the role of universities.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, we remain committed to the rich tradition of liberal education, articulated by John Henry Newman,<sup>2</sup> while on the other perpetuate the German research model of Wilhelm von Humbolt.<sup>3</sup> While universities generally espouse the importance of both, debates about balance and the value of the two continue to this day, as universities are expected to teach, support research and innovation, serve as economic drivers, and cultivate social responsibility and citizenship in their students. And all this with fewer resources, greater public scrutiny, and a very real sense that universities are under siege, often, it seems, by people who think they know us and who won't take the time to find out what we are.

Fast forward into the second half of the twentieth century and we hear in gloomy voices that universities cannot be trusted. George Roche in *The Fall of the Ivory Tower* observes that universities have lost their “integrity and idealism,”<sup>4</sup> that we have abandoned the moral high ground, and succumbed to the “rootlessness and self-doubt” of society at large. Alan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind* writes that the modern university possesses “no vision . . . of what an educated human being is.”<sup>5</sup> In *The University in Ruins*, Bill Reading talks of how the university “no longer participates in the historical project for humanity that was the legacy of the Enlightenment,” and asks whether we have reached the “twilight of the University’s critical and social function.”<sup>6</sup>

What we are experiencing today is not new. More and more, though, the conversation focuses on undergraduate education, perhaps because we increasingly see our futures in the hands of the young people who attend our universities. Coates and Morrison are unequivocal in their position—that “the global university system needs a reset, as do the expectations of young people, their families, and governments.”<sup>7</sup> Universities have long provided the dream of prosperity, defined as a good job and a good life. But, for Coates and Morrison, universities have now become victims of mass education, dependent for “their existence on selling their product—their dream to an ever-wider audience.”<sup>8</sup>

We are constantly reminded how teaching takes second place to research. Repeated editorials focus attention on how funding for undergraduate education is redirected to the research enterprise. There is, as a consequence, a reduction of full-time tenured faculty, and an increase in the use of less expensive sessional lecturers about whose miserable circumstances we often hear but do little to remedy.<sup>9</sup> Implicit in this discussion is the oft-repeated claim that we cannot afford the universities we have. Clark, Trick, and Van Loon in their book *Academic Reform: The Quality and Cost Effectiveness of Undergraduate Education in Ontario*<sup>10</sup> advocate for a new kind of undergraduate university which can deliver teaching in a less expensive way than the research-intensive universities, where at best 40% of a faculty member's time is committed to teaching.

Delivering undergraduate education at less cost is one solution to the financial challenge faced by universities. Another is to find new sources of revenue, whether it be for teaching or for any other purpose. The so-called "corporatization" of universities has drawn bitter condemnation in recent years, many seeing it as the abandoning of the institution's core. It is no longer about education; it is about money.<sup>11</sup> John Levin observes how higher education institutions have become "aligned with neoliberal principles . . . portrayed through the conceptual and theoretical lens of academic capitalism, entrepreneurialism, commercialization, new capitalism, and managerialism," which, in turn, have negatively impacted institutional "interest in a comprehensive curriculum, community responsiveness, emphasis on teaching, and focus upon students."<sup>12</sup>

Much, too, has been written about a research industry out of control, with thousands of articles written each year of questionable significance and impact other than they are necessary for tenure and promotion. One cannot disregard Mark Bauerlein's exposé of the research enterprise at least as it applies to the humanities?<sup>13</sup> As he asks, do we need 80 pieces of scholarship on George Eliot each year or 5,000 studies of Melville since 1960? More damning is his contention that no one is referencing the books and articles we produce anyway. For students, they don't much count at all; as Bauerlein pointedly remarks, "more books and articles don't expand the audience for literary studies." And in recent days, much has been written about the value of rankings, notably the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, which tells us precious little about the student experience and puts almost its entire focus on research productivity. Michelle Stack gets it right when she says, "Rankings are seductive, but it's time to focus on education."<sup>14</sup>

A major development of the last few years is alternate credentials and new kinds of institutions. Sean Gallagher's recent study, *The Future of University Credentials*, goes to the root of what we do, calling into question the very credentials we offer. The last decade or so has seen the development of all sorts of new credentials, from badges to MOOCs,<sup>15</sup> and left us wondering whether the four-year degree is sustainable in the future. In a period of just-in-time education and lifelong learning, up front education does not make much sense and many students do not desire to take four years (now typically five years) in the pursuit of a degree. At the same time, the market has been filled with other deliverers, from the University of Phoenix to Mozilla, offering a host of different credentials including degrees. While there is sometimes skepticism about their standards, the flexibility they introduce into the market is not one easily achieved by traditional universities.

Finally, there are those who suggest that universities are at so many levels not doing a good job at providing undergraduate education, whether it be in the programs they offer, the quality of their graduates, or the time and emphasis they place on teaching. The findings of Arum and Roksa<sup>16</sup> are often quoted to demonstrate the inadequacy of undergraduate education in the U.S., and there is no particular reason to believe things are any different in Canada. Further there is a growing criticism that universities have their priorities wrong, funding as they do an increasingly costly social safety net for students,<sup>17</sup> and spending too much on athletics,<sup>18</sup> extracurricular activity, and capital infrastructure.

There is much to be argued for and against any one of these views. The point is that together they indicate that we have some serious issues to address. That these issues are being raised suggests that at the very least we must step outside the box to look for new possibilities.

## **Background**

British Columbia, Canada's most westerly province, has long had a post-secondary system that identified two very specific kinds of institutions: the "research universities," of which there are four, and a series of community colleges, which offer technical and vocational programming, academic upgrading, and, in some cases, a two-year Associate Diploma in Arts and Science, which

can be used to complete a degree at any one of the provincial universities. This model is, of course, commonplace in the United States.

With only one exception, the B.C. universities were located in the lower mainland, while the colleges were distributed with the intention of bringing post-secondary education to geographically isolated parts of the province. The intention was to keep young people at home in their communities and not lose them to the big cities. It was natural that some of the colleges began delivering degrees, albeit awarded by the established universities, who retained control over curriculum and standards. And it was only a matter of time before they began pressing for independent academic authority and for university status. Resulting from the Campus 2020 Report,<sup>19</sup> a comprehensive review of post-secondary education conducted in 2007, the British Columbia Government created five new universities the following year.

The situation in Alberta was not much different. Alberta had four established universities, a series of comprehensive community colleges, and two major technical institutes. Two of these colleges were of significant size with one institution located in each of the two major cities, each of which already had a major research university and a technical institute. The colleges, as in BC, offered two-year transfer programs, vocational and technical education, and academic upgrading. Beginning in the early 1990s, the two larger colleges were allowed to offer degrees, which led to the awarding of university status in 2009.

Throughout this process, mission creep remained a concern, the fear being that over time each of the new universities would aspire to be a comprehensive research institution, and would abandon the emphasis on access, teaching, and undergraduate education that were primary reasons for their existence in the first place and that were part of their original mandates as colleges. Accordingly, British Columbia specified the new universities as “purpose specific” universities,<sup>20</sup> while Alberta identified the two new universities as Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions.<sup>21</sup> More than this, it was made explicit that each of the institutions would continue to offer all the programs it did as a college. . Very recently the Government of Alberta amended the Post-Secondary Learning Act to relabel the new universities as specifically “undergraduate universities,” and in doing so reaffirmed that they may not offer graduate programs. Further the new legislation limited the new

universities to “research and scholarly activities that enrich undergraduate education.”<sup>22</sup> Finally, the government closed the door on any other institutions becoming universities by specifically mandating all the universities to work collaboratively with other sectors in providing access to undergraduate degree programs.

That these institutions have enjoyed success is obvious from all the usual performance indicators. Enrolments continue to rise, performance on such instruments as NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) are impressive, access has increased, new programs have been launched, the general perception of the institutions has been increasingly positive, and initial confusion of mandate seems to have been set aside. Students have consistently given the new universities “A” grades for teaching as in the *Globe and Mail Canadian University Report Card*.<sup>23</sup> In short, the new universities have clearly established themselves as an alternative to the large research universities.

Legitimacy comes in many forms, and of significance is that four of the five new universities in British Columbia and both the Alberta universities have qualified for membership in Universities Canada. While Universities Canada serves as an important advocacy body for Canadian universities with the federal government, and as a platform for issues relating to Canadian universities,<sup>24</sup> it has, over time, also become a *de facto* accreditation body in the absence of anything else. Institutions applying for membership must submit to a comprehensive review process that dwells on issues such as program, faculty relations, governance, finances, and student body. While there are specific advantages of membership—access to federal grants and academic legitimacy of credentials—the more important benefit is the simple one of “belonging to the club.” Universities Canada membership brings recognition and legitimacy, indicating as it does that an institution meets the standards expected of any university in the country.

### **Challenges and Successes**

While the creation of these new universities was viewed positively by students, government, and the public, they faced significant challenges, which required effort, political and otherwise, to resolve. There was in both provinces a significant government oversight not the case for the established universities, which suggested a concern about mandate creep from the very start. In

British Columbia, it was made explicit that there would be no new funding, which made program development exceedingly difficult, given that the institutions were required to retain everything they did as a college. More than anything else, however, the new universities were different, and nothing of the sort had been seen in Canada before. Among students, there was confusion—were these institutions actual universities or were they colleges or polytechnics, or some sort of hybrid?

Degrees are routinely viewed as the currency of universities while two year diplomas are offered by colleges. That the new universities continued to offer college-level work created ambiguity, which at least initially had a negative impact on institutional reputation, and which continues to be an exception among Canadian universities. That the British Columbia universities offered trades training with no apparent transferability especially exacerbated ambiguity of mission. The cultural divide between those teaching welding and faculty in the history department is not easily bridged, although the BC universities have worked hard to find common ground among the disparate disciplines they teach, even while, in unenviable financial circumstances, they have introduced new degree programs.

Each of the two new Alberta universities responded to this situation differently. One institution essentially abandoned college diplomas, converting them into degrees. A very different approach was taken by the second institution. Diplomas continued to be offered but with several differences. First, every two-year program is intended to bridge into a degree program, and second, the academic standards (admission, graduation requirements) for both diplomas and degrees are the same. In some cases, college programs comprise courses identical with the first several years of a university degree so bridging was relatively easy. Examples include the Bachelor of Social Work, which bridges from a diploma in Social Work. The same is the case for Psychiatric Nursing, Business, Design, and Music. In other cases, college diploma and degree requirements are distinct. A student majoring in a two-year program in massage therapy may complete a degree in Applied Health Administration with two additional years of study, and a student completing a Library Technician program has the option to complete a Bachelor of Arts.

The decision to retain diplomas, albeit with adjusted standards, was driven by an understanding that they were popular and in demand. Anything other was viewed as compromising access,



something very important to the institution when it operated as a college. At the same time, linking these programs with degree completion suggested a general acceptance that two and three-year diploma programs are insufficient in today's world, and that students deserve to have an opportunity to complete a degree should they choose to do so.

Discussion on diplomas and degrees was also important for how it focused attention on the more fundamental issue of institutional culture. In this respect, the role of the faculty and how they are recognized became a flashpoint. While colleges tend to operate on a principle of professional equity—that all instructors are treated the same—this is not the case with universities which are very much merit-driven. The core of the argument had everything to do with a sense of self-worth. Legacy faculty from college days felt uncomfortable with the new competitive environment of the university. Some saw it as a new reality for which they had not signed on, that the institution as a college was already doing a good job, and that it would take the institution away from its traditional college emphasis of giving students a “leg up.” That legacy faculty were resistant to change and concerned that their contributions were unappreciated is entirely understandable, even as new often younger faculty hired in growing degree programs were impatient for change, bringing with them the values they knew as graduate students.

This cultural divide was especially evident in discussion about academic rank and its connection with salary. New faculty wanted academic rank as a way of demonstrating legitimacy in the larger university community. To use the college label of “instructor” sends in the university world the message that one is a junior faculty member, often with limited credentials and a time-limited appointment. Introducing academic rank and tying salary with rank has met with varying success. With a strong union environment and limited resources, the new BC universities have struggled. The Alberta institutions, with more resources, have negotiated collective agreements mirroring other university-faculty agreements in Canada.

A major issue for some institutions relates to the duties and responsibilities of faculty. Colleges typically require a teaching load of eight-semester courses, and there was the understanding that these teaching loads would continue for the new universities. While the two Alberta universities continue to claim that teaching is their primary responsibility, the signs are there that this is already

being eroded. The hiring of new faculty for whom research achievement is necessary for broader professional recognition has led to a call for decreased teaching loads. A six-semester course load is now standard and already there is pressure for a further teaching reduction for those especially active with research. Further, the institutions themselves have not been entirely committed to their mission. They have made substantial financial commitments to research, including research funding and time release, and have developed designated administrative infrastructures supporting research. Further they have been only too happy to celebrate faculty research success that is often used to promote their legitimacy as universities.

This growing commitment to traditional research constitutes a challenge to why these institutions were created in the first place: smaller class size, a more intimate learning environment, the use of fulltime faculty, and reduced costs. The use of sessional and limited-term instructors has dramatically increased, not only to decrease costs, but also to provide resources that allow for new program growth and dare we say, research. Of interest is that faculty are allowed to choose either a teaching stream with an eight-course teaching load or a more traditional faculty stream of research, teaching, and service. Virtually no new faculty opted for the teaching stream, and of those legacy faculty who chose academic rank only a handful chose the teaching stream. The exception is those legacy faculty who chose to be grandfathered and retain their college designation of instructor, notwithstanding the obvious downside that in a merit-driven system where rank and salary are tied, this decision will have significant economic impact over time for individual faculty members.

The new universities have all recognized that governance is the defining element of a university. College Boards of Governors have been subject to new legislation or have sometimes voluntarily given up authority to create a true bicameral form of institutional governance. The division of responsibility between academic matters and those dealing with fiduciary and legal issues remains confusing to those outside universities although history has demonstrated that bicameral governance works even if it is messy at times. At least initially, this lack of understanding was present within institutions and the learning curve for traditional college faculty of what constituted bicameral governance was a steep one. Implicit in this debate was the undertaking that faculty move from being employees to those making decisions about institutional direction previously

the responsibility of the Board of Governors or the administration. This additional responsibility was sometimes looked upon with suspicion because it brought more work and a new accountability. At the same time, the introduction of collegial governance was the biggest single factor in bringing institutions together, bridging as it did the two apparent solitudes of college and university faculty by identifying the authority of academic departments, faculties, chief academic bodies and boards. The introduction of collegial governance allowed faculty to gain an understanding beyond their own departments, and with that to shape the university in ways never afforded to them before.

The introduction of bicameral governance did reduce, however, the control and influence exercised by the original college boards and by faculty unions/associations, especially as they relate to academic mission and program. The implications are only now becoming clear. Accepting that they no longer had the same role as they did in a college was challenging for some Boards to accept. The same might be said for faculty unions, which saw their influence diminished, believing as they did that the employer-employee relationship was the most important one in the university, and that matters now handled by a chief academic body are properly the business of collective bargaining. Unions often saw themselves as protecting the *status quo*, and struggling, as did the university generally, with representing the interests of two very different kinds of faculty.

One final consequence of the move to university status and a change in institutional governance relates to the non-academic staff of the institution. In the equalitarian environment of a college, the distinction between faculty and staff was often negligible, as both participated fully in the life of the institution. Often, too, they were committed to the institution as a college, and unenthusiastic about the new status of university. With a change to university status, the relationship with staff changed, with faculty now identified as the group making the decisions. Staff participation on governing councils as well as committees was seriously reduced, and there is no question this caused hard feelings. It also called into question the role of unions which represent staff. Membership on committees, for example, was the responsibility of academic councils or the administration, and the staff union had little voice in the selection process.

### **What about the Future?**

An institution's right to manage its own affairs is something that is increasingly under fire because of demands for greater public accountability. This is not new, but it is the case that governments are choosing to exercise increased authority over universities. Increasingly one hears about the erosion of both board authority and academic independence on everything from program approval to collective bargaining and executive compensation. Public skepticism about universities, trumpeted so often in newspaper editorials and often drawing on sketchy hearsay evidence, has increasingly bedevilled universities even as students continue to come their way. This, in turn, has often shaped government views about higher education. The classic example is the student who can't transfer from college to university, which in turn is used to suggest the entire transfer system is broken. Criticism of privileged faculty who offload their teaching responsibilities to poorly paid sessional lecturers are legion, and the concern is not without merit.

We cannot disregard the importance of institutional autonomy, rooted as it is in the belief that the university is the one place where questions are asked and curiosity is exercised. The issue is how do we align institutional autonomy with public accountability, and in this regard the new universities discussed in this paper are an interesting case. The cultural forces on the new universities to become like the rest are immense, and to swim against deeply entrenched university values is an overwhelming challenge. It is necessary if not popular to accept that universities, notwithstanding their sense of independence, are creatures of public policy, and that they are subject to political forces reflecting the needs and expectations of the students and taxpayers who fund them. Independence might be fundamental to universities, but they are not fully independent players, and pursuing legitimate institutional ambition within the limitations of government mandate remains problematic.

We often hear in promotional literature that universities put their students first although one might ask whether this is more about branding than something rooted in reality. In Canada every university regardless of size claims to be an "outstanding" university for students if not the "most outstanding" university in the country. More than this, universities always want to be something more, a regional institution wants to be one with a national reputation, an undergraduate university wants to have graduate programs, and there is an ambition to do more research and to be better at it. Even in the new universities, there is the call to be more than an undergraduate university, that

somehow it is not enough and that there is something second class about it. Inevitably the call for an MBA comes from the Business School when we really need to ask how many MBA programs do we need?

How do we guard against this inevitable creep? We need to understand that government commitment to larger issues of public policy is not something from which universities can hide. There are limits to what universities might aspire, and we cannot have everything we want. We might publicly declare that all we desire is to be the best of what we are. But evidence suggests this is not the case. Take the new universities. Is government edict is the only thing that will prevent the inevitable movement to be like everyone else. Even if governments are explicit about mandates, the fact that universities are self governing at arms length from government allows for a flexibility that will allow for a growing research culture. The other potential driver is public funding and to what degree government will allow it to be used for activities outside institutional mandate? It remains to be seen whether there is the political will to go down this road.

No one would deny the important role of universities in research and innovation. But does every university need to be in the business? In a world driven by increasing specialization, it is ironic that universities are reluctant to discriminate among one another. The irony gets even more profound when one realizes that specialization and differentiation are fundamental to academic identity. Gone are the days of the generalists. We keep repeating old clichés—that there is a clear link between good teaching and good research. There are indeed faculty who are tremendous at both, and there are many examples of superb teachers who are so because they are equally outstanding researchers. We might see this as the ideal. But there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the opposite is true, that one can be an outstanding teacher without an interest in research other than that what is related to teaching.<sup>25</sup> We live in a world, however, where the value of a university is too often driven by research output, the implication being that this is what drives innovation and economic growth, and we often overlook that the single greatest contribution universities have to the future are their graduates.

Having said this, however, one must accept that considerable effort is being made to integrate teaching and research in the interests of students. It is too easy to paint teaching and research as

mutually exclusive and to characterize faculty research as something deleterious to undergraduate education. Much has been written on this subject although there is still no absolute conclusion of what constitutes this form of integrated learning and whether it actually has any impact. Mick Healey references how “the complexity and contested nature of the linkages between research and teaching” reflect “differences in the way that the terms ‘research’ and ‘teaching and learning’ are conceptualized,” as well as the particular disciplinary culture in which teaching and research are taking place.<sup>26</sup> And Michael Prince, Richard Felder and Rebecca Brent, while accepting that synergies exist between faculty research and undergraduate teaching, argue that empirical studies clearly show that the existing linkage is weak.<sup>27</sup>

As the new western Canadian universities confront the challenge of not falling back into old models of research and teaching, they must address issues of balance and relative importance. Professional advancement and legitimacy in the larger academic community demand that faculty pursue research, and this is not going to change in the near future. Having said this, however, teaching should not be seen as a detriment to research, or as we sometimes hear “it takes away time from research.” Nor should we dismiss the likelihood that a faculty member’s research interests connects, either directly or indirectly, with their teaching.

To much, perhaps, we have backed into an either or situation when what is really needed is balance. If the new universities are to recognize the importance of scholarly activity, it must remain clear that student learning remain the primary focus. This is something that should be made clear to any new hires. For the new universities, it is the line in the sand, and if it is crossed then they will over time become like virtually any other university, and their much vaunted commitment to students and student learning will become history. Discussions concerning teaching and research must be a part of creating a new learning environment, one that moves away from the standard lecture model with its slavish dependence on powerpoint, and confronts students with real problems and assumes that learning is not just a matter of conveying information.<sup>28</sup> The new universities, already taking a different road, have an opportunity to be at the forefront of student learning, not only in looking at new models, but in providing the necessary resources are made available for success.

Is the western Canadian experiment a success? It is too early to tell. But if nothing else it suggests that a different approach is possible albeit whether it is sustainable is another question. Universities are often criticized for perpetuating a self-serving culture and assuming a privilege that suggests special status. The fact is that it has worked for a very long time. There have been watershed moments—the creation of the German universities, the establishment of land grant universities, the conversion of polytechnics to universities in Britain, the proliferation of private deliverers—but attitudes and values remain strong and unassailable. We might be at another of those moments, and that in their own way the new universities in western Canada could be a model for the future. The challenges facing them are significant, and it remains to be seen whether they can sustain their current trajectory as a real alternative or whether over time they will become a pale shadow of what might truly have been something special.

History suggests that the possibility for real change in universities is challenging, and for the new western Canadian universities many questions remaining unanswered. What will be the longterm acceptance of the degrees offered by these new institutions? In the pecking order of the post-secondary world, will these institutions, with their undergraduate focus and their very particular kind of college-university comprehensiveness, be seen as not of the same quality as those offering graduate programs and having an emphasis on research. At the very least the new universities must continue to track their students to determine what happens to them after graduation. In the current competitive environment, it will be critical to assert the value of their credentials. Is there an appreciable quality difference in teaching between these new universities and other more conventional institutions that sustains their value proposition? We say there is a difference in what we provide. Is this really the case or is it just a sentiment in which we all like to believe. Is it possible for these institutions to sustain their commitment to a new form of comprehensiveness that does not distinguish between what is conventional college programming and that of a university? To some degree, the new universities have forged new and creative connections? Is this a new form of comprehensiveness that might be imitated in other jurisdictions? And, perhaps, most of all, is it sustainable given established pressures that define success in the university world? All these questions remain to be answered.

It is always easy to be skeptical about universities. They are institutions unlike any others, which operate in a way unfathomable to many, which have always remained apart from society, and which pride themselves on the freedom they hold so dear but that is unavailable in any other organization. It is easy to criticize. The life of a faculty member is one of extraordinary privilege, which sometimes does not sit well with those on the outside looking in. But universities continue to attract students, who, after graduation, reap the benefits of their degrees and often continue to live on in the life of their institution as alumni. While there may be a need for change, and we may be at some sort of crossroads, it is important that we not forget the rich tradition of which even the new universities of Alberta and British Columbia are clearly a part.

One is left then asking whether there can be adjustment to institutional culture and faculty expectations, a new form of détente where institutional interests and public policy can align? Our students graduate into a world that few teaching in universities have ever experienced. The likelihood of finding employment immediately upon graduation is for many remote. They struggle under the burden of debt, and many still have no idea what lies ahead. One might argue, of course, that this is a generation of students that will live longer, and that there is no particular urgency for them to “settle down.” What they have studied in university will be dated inside of ten years, if not sooner. All this suggests a watershed moment.

One thing needs to be remembered. The most important activity that occurs in any university relates to students and what they learn. We might draft strategic plans, craft new programs, and obsess about institutional reputation. We might assert the university’s role as an agent of social change, and as a critical influence in the communities in which it is located. But inevitably it comes down to the special relationship between a faculty member and a student. This is the crucible where real learning occurs, and this must remain at the very center of all that we do. As long as this remains central to the new universities, there is a real chance that what they represent provides a new and sustainable model for the future.



<sup>1</sup> Simon Wortham, *Rethinking the university: Leverage and deconstruction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 81-87.

<sup>2</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 1854: “Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence. Everything has its own perfection, be it higher or lower in the scale of things: and the perfection of one is not the perfection of another. Things animate, inanimate, visible, invisible, all are good in their kind, and have a best of themselves, which is an object of pursuit.”

<sup>3</sup> Influenced by Wilhelm von Humbolt and founded in 1910, the University of Berlin had many features fundamental to the modern university, including a commitment to both research and teaching, freedom of choice for students, and institutional autonomy.

<sup>4</sup> George Roche, *The Fall of the Ivory Tower: Government, Funding, Corruption, and the Bankrupting of American Higher Education* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 1994). Roche blames a “liberal-left agenda” focusing on race, class, and gender at the expense of competent management, misplaced priorities, and outright corruption” (p.3).

<sup>5</sup> Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1987), p. 337.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 11-13.

<sup>7</sup> Ken Coates. Bill Morrison, *Dream Factories: Why Universities Won't Solve the Youth Jobs Crisis* (Toronto: TAP Books, 2016), p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>9</sup> Brandon Dimmel, “What It Means to be a Sessional Instructor at a Canadian University,” <http://www.cha-sch.ca>; “Sessionals up close,” *University Affairs*, <http://www.universityaffairs.ca>; Adrianna Kezar Susan Abertiae, Dan Maxey, “A New Faculty Path,” <https://www.knsidehighered.com>.

<sup>10</sup> Ian D. Clark, David Trick, Richard Van Loon, *Academic Reform: Policy Options for Improving the Quality and Cost-Effectiveness of Undergraduate Education in Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: Queen’s Policy Studies Series (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Datna Catropa, Margaret Andrews, “Bemoaning the Corporatization of Higher Education,” <https://www.insidehighered.com>; Ronald W. Cox, Class, “The Corporatization of Higher Education”, Class, Race and Corporate Power, <http://digitalcommons.fici.edu>; Ellen Schrecker, *The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, the Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University* (New York: The New Press, 2010), Henry Girouz, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* ((Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> John S. Levin, *Community Colleges and New Universities under Neoliberal Pressures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1013.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Bauerlein, “The Research Bust,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2017, p. 5 (<http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Research-Bust/129930>).

<sup>14</sup> Michelle Stack, “Let’s focus on education, not university rankings,” *Globe and Mail*, Sept. 6, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Sean Gallagher, *The Future of University Credentials* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Richard Arum, Jasipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Mental health, students with disabilities, diversity offices, ombudspersons, sexual violence prevention constitute an ever-growing list of important responsibilities.

<sup>18</sup> The Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics reports that “median spending per athlete in each major athletics conference ranges from 4 to 11 times than the median spending on

education-related activities per student” (*Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values, and the Future of College Sports*, p. 5).

<sup>19</sup> Campus 2020 Report, <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/campus2020/campus2020-thinkingahead-report.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> *The University of British Columbia Act* defines a special purpose university as one that “serves a geographic area or region of the province, provides adult basic education, career, technical, trade and academic programs leading to certificates, diplomas and baccalaureate and masters (Section 47).

<sup>21</sup> *The Alberta Post-Secondary Learning Act*, 102.3.3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. 9.1-2

<sup>23</sup> *Canadian University Report* (<https://beta.the.globeandmail.com/Canada/education/Canadian-university-report>)

<sup>24</sup> Universities Canada describes itself as “the voice of Canadian universities, at home and abroad: (<https://www.univcan.ca/about> us).

<sup>25</sup> Janet Halliwell, *The Nexus of Teaching and Research: Evidence and Insights from the Literature*, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Mick Healey, “Linking research and teaching: exploring disciplinary spaces and the role of inquiry-based learning, Reshaping the University: New Relationships between Research, Scholarship and Teaching” <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org>, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Michael J. Prince, Richard M. Felder, Rebecca Brent, Does Faculty Research Improve Undergraduate Teaching? An Analysis of Existing and Potential Synergies,” <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/2673541405>, p. 1. Prince, Felder, and Brent write “research productivity has become the dominant and sometimes the sole criterion for hiring, tenure, and promotion” and that “this pressure has led to increased faculty research activity, not only at research universities, but also at institutions with teaching as their primary mission.”

<sup>28</sup> See Ishwar Puri, Leonard Waverlman, “How the university can save itself—from itself,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 27, 2019, p. 08.