

S-123 and SUP - 442.**Tackling the Toughest Challenges in Modern American HIGHER Education**

Harvard University
Fall Semester, 2013-2014
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Teaching Fellow: Mr. John Hansen

Brief Overview of goals for this class.

American Higher Education is in most peoples' eyes the envy of the world. In my own judgment, it deserves to be the envy of the world. American colleges and universities are getting a lot of things right. Yet not so long ago, General Motors was the envy of the world, and the world is changing quickly. What are the challenges, at least the predictable ones, that many American colleges and universities will face in the next few years? Can American colleges and universities remain great? I don't mean in a hundred years, I mean literally in two or three or five or ten years.

For example, America is unique in the world for having more than 150 small, liberal arts colleges. No other nation has such institutions, and certainly so many of them. So we will ask, what is their future? What are their strengths? Their vulnerabilities? Two presidents of "top ten" liberal arts colleges, campuses that are far richer than average, recently told me that "their current business model is broken and it is unsustainable..." What did they mean? What can be done? In this class we will discuss exactly what both of these leaders meant, and YOU will decide what can be done.

For example, America is increasingly asking its colleges and universities to become more "accountable" to their tuition paying students and their families. This can require widespread assessment of students' actual learning. Public institutions in particular, since they are subsidized with taxpayer monies, are increasingly now being asked to provide evidence of concrete, serious, student learning. How should colleges and universities do that? How can they do that? What is the difference between words such as "Accreditation," and "Accountability," and "Assessment?"

For example, just recently for the class of students entering in fall, 2012, California State Colleges and universities had to turn away more than 20,000 applicants who they report they would have been admitted to these public colleges as recently as last year. Plus tuition was raised by twenty percent in one year. It is easy to make the argument this change is bad for those students, bad for California, and bad for America. Would anyone in our class

like to try to make an argument that perhaps this shocking change might actually be GOOD for California? Or for American higher education? And why this might be so?

For example, it is no secret that demographics in America are rapidly changing. We are a nation where just 21 years ago, in 1990, 23 percent of high school graduates were students of color. In 2000, that fraction rose to 31 percent. In 2013, that number grew to 38 percent. Projections are that in 2020 that number will exceed 46 percent and by 2030, long before anyone taking this class begins to receive Medicare checks, that number will exceed 50 percent. This is a dramatic change in less than two generations. So -- - QUESTION - - how in the face of this increasingly diverse society can ALL types of institutions, private and public, highly selective and less selective, rich and not so rich, help each student to succeed - - as each college steadily admits a group of students from increasingly diverse social, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds?

For example, more than fourteen percent of high school students in America today are either immigrants or children of immigrants. Should college leaders and professors be changing what they teach, and how they teach, in light of this large influx of new Americans? It is easy to make the simple assertion that these students deserve a topnotch education. It is perhaps just a bit harder to make a thoughtful and rigorous argument about what, exactly, should change in colleges, and why. Should Introductory Chemistry or Physics be taught differently in the year 2020 than it was in the year 2010? How about History or English or Sociology or Psychology?

For example, it is nearly impossible to attend a modern Conference on undergraduate life, and not have speaker after speaker extol the virtues of “studying abroad,” or “spending time abroad” in an “increasingly globalized world...” Might there be some students in our class who have the courage to make a compelling argument that for some students, spending a semester or a year studying abroad during their time at a university is a POOR idea? And for those who believe this is true, WHEN and FOR WHOM might study abroad be an “unproductive idea?” Conversely, when is study abroad for students while in college a highly productive and excellent idea?

For example, the vast majority of American students attend PUBLIC universities, quite unlike Harvard or Stanford or Amherst or Pomona or Bowdoin or Kenyon College. In fact, last year more than 78 percent of all undergraduates attended PUBLIC universities. The enrollments at Wellesley, Dartmouth, Kenyon and Pomona are 2,100, 4,500, 1,600, and 1,900. The enrollments at the Univ. of Texas, Ohio State and Univ. Florida Gulf Coast Univ. and Arizona State. are 49,800, 51,000, 55,900, and 68,800. There are certain differences - - other than sheer size of course - - that come up consistently between private vs. public institutions. What are those differences? How do those differences affect students? Are any current gaps in quality between public vs. private colleges and

universities shrinking? Are they growing? How can we make such judgments? Why are such questions even important?

Throughout this course, we will tackle such questions. Some of them are truly hard. The nicest feature of tackling such topics is that many of them do NOT have “obvious” correct answers. People of good will can easily have different answers. If we ask how can we know that a college or university is offering its students good “value added” during their precious time at college, there are about ten different ways of measuring this. And ten different people, all full of goodwill, can disagree on the choice of what kind of measure, what sort of evidence, is most convincing.

I hope this class will retain, as much as possible, the format of a Seminar. That means each of YOU, the students, will be asked to contribute to class regularly. You will be asked to speak up. We will have debates, where two students will argue in favor of Proposition “X” and two other students will argue the exact opposite, and will argue against Proposition “X” Our debates will be about genuinely controversial topics, such as Affirmative Action, Standardized Testing, How to Measure College Effectiveness, How to deal with differences among students from different backgrounds who attend the same campus, How to help all students, including those at some risk, to succeed. We will have small group presentations by you, the students, about the five books that we will read, the articles that we will read, and we will have several groups working on topics about which books haven’t even yet been written!

There will be a substantial group of readings, and this year I am going to try a new idea - - we will include among your readings, four final papers from students who took this class last year and wrote exceptionally good final papers. All of these papers received a final grade of “A,” and all of them are connected to a topic or theme for one of our class sessions. By sharing these final papers, with of course full permission from the students who wrote them last time I taught this class, you will both benefit from reading the “substance” of each paper, plus you will get a flavor of the many forms that excellence for a final paper can take in this course. Sometimes reading work by your fellow students is a great way to get insights about what constitutes rigorous work, and what kind of paper receives a final grade of “A.” I hope you will genuinely enjoy this.

Now let’s turn to Administrative features of our class, and then a session by session outline, complete with readings for each session.

Administrative Details:

We will meet every week, for two hours on Mondays from 4pm to 6pm in Longfellow Hall room 319 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. There will also be regular,

additional sessions (typically about one hour each week) that are run by our TF, Mr. John Hansen, who is an advanced doctoral student in Higher Education Policy. My office hours will be announced in class, and I am also additionally available by appointment. Tuesdays and Thursdays are my best days for meetings. Tentatively, and just to start the semester, office hours for this class will be both before and after class. Plus I will add more, as will John Hansen.

I have an Office at the Ed School and also one at the Kennedy School. Ed School office is in Larsen Hall 307, and the Kennedy School office is in Belfer Building, room 508. The two Schools are just three short blocks apart, and I walk back and forth between them every day. It is easy to meet with you in either place. Office Telephone in both offices is 495-1183. My staff assistant is Ms. Minoo Ghoreishi, who is in Belfer Building right across the hall from my office at the Kennedy School. Her telephone is 617 – 384 – 7329.. My e-mail is Richard_light@harvard.edu and John Hansen will share his e-mail with you.

One special feature of this class.

In addition to our regular, weekly class sessions, each Monday, I hope to arrange a few EXTRA, and OPTIONAL, additional sessions. Since one goal of this class is to introduce students to a broad variety of challenges, topics, issues, and roles for leaders in higher education, we will have several GUESTS who come to visit our class. Each will make short presentations and then lead a follow-up discussion. For example, two years ago the Dean of Admissions at Duke University (Mr. Christoph Guttentag) was a special guest several times. Highly successful. As was the Director of Admissions for all International Students at Harvard College (Ms. Robin Worth). I am entirely aware these extra sessions will not work for everyone in the class, in terms of timing, because of your other obligations. Many of you have childcare or other conflicts. Therefore, I want to emphasize STRONGLY these extra sessions are ENTIRELY VOLUNTARILY. THEY ARE TRULY OPTIONAL. I am fully aware that some students will not be able to make these “extra” sessions. You may have daycare challenges for your children, or another class at that time, or various other constraints on your time.

Yet for those members of the class who CAN come, even to just one or two, I always will announce these extra sessions several weeks in advance. That will at least give everyone who can possibly come, a chance to plan ahead as much as possible. I just want to be sure that everyone is genuinely clear - - these extra several evening sessions truly are VOLUNTARY and OPTIONAL. No-one ever will be “tested” on what is covered in these extra sessions. I will give more details about these extra evenings when they are arranged. My current best guess is that we will have about three of these extra, optional sessions.

YOUR Obligations for this class:

1. There are weekly reading assignments. Assignments for the first ELEVEN of our thirteen weeks this fall semester are given in detail on this syllabus. I am intentionally leaving the two final sessions somewhat open. This way, depending upon YOUR interests as a group, which I won't know until we meet a few times, we will have some flexibility to build our final few classes around YOUR substantive interests.

2. You will each have THREE SHORT papers during the course with a specific assignment. John and I will give each of you written feedback. All of you should know that I view writing a concise and crisp two page paper on a complex topic as every bit as challenging, maybe even more challenging, than writing a ten page paper.

3. There also will be a FINAL, LONGER, END OF COURSE PAPER. Its exact length is up to you, but it should be quite substantial - - in the range of approximately 20 double spaced pages, plus or minus. I care far more about the quality than about the exact length.

I view the final course paper as a serious, research paper. It can be mainly qualitative, mainly quantitative, or a combination of the two. Often in past years the final research paper has consisted of a topnotch literature review and synthesis on a topic any of you can choose. I do NOT expect you to “gather brand new data,” although each year several students choose to do that, given their topic interests. And in the spirit of making this course maximally useful for each of YOU, your final paper can be on ANY TOPIC YOU CHOOSE - - SO LONG AS YOUR TOPIC IS CLEARLY CONNECTED TO THE WORK OF THIS COURSE.

In that spirit, each student will be asked to submit a one page prospectus for your final paper by early November, one full month before the end of the semester. Then John and I can give each of you individual feedback, with brief, concrete reactions to, and suggestions for your plans. I am required to hand in grades for all of you by Monday, Dec. 16th. SO your final paper will be due on Wednesday, Dec. 11th, 2013. We will observe this schedule in a serious way. This plan gives each student a full week after this course ends, and indeed after ALL of your courses end, to finish and to hand in your final paper. Early submissions are welcome, and ENCOURAGED. If you hand in your final paper early, we will grade it early and give you a quick response.

4. Class Participation is an important part of this course. There is enormous variation in how much “talking” students are invited to do in classes at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and at the Kennedy School. For this class, YOUR participation will constitute a serious part of making it both productive and enjoyable. MY goal is to encourage cordial disagreements and debates on issues that often will be controversial. YOUR goal is to do the assigned readings each week, to attend regularly and come

prepared, and to contribute and move our class discussions forward. I hope our debates will get your gastric juices flowing. I will feel free to provoke disagreements whenever I feel there is too much “unanimity” in our class on some of the difficult questions we will tackle.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THIS CLASS:

1. If time allows, I will ask each of you to play the role of Foundation Program Officer. I will share with the entire class a group of actual proposals from ten campuses. They are actual proposals submitted by ten quite different and diverse types of campuses, where each campus asks for substantial financial support to try an innovation, or to change something to help students succeed. Working in teams of two, or perhaps three, I will ask everyone in the class to rank order the proposals in their merit for funding. And then to explain to the rest of the class why you chose they way you did. All of these proposals are real, and you will see the name of the School that submitted each one.

2. I will ask each of you to participate in at least one and perhaps two debates. Each debate will have two sides, and therefore two teams. Each team will probably consist of two people in the class. This means each ‘team’ will need to prepare their arguments, and ‘get their case together’ outside of class. After each team presents its side, the debate is thrown open to the entire class and anyone in class can ask anyone on either team a question, or make a point, or explain why everyone else has missed the main point and this person is the only one in the entire room who really understands and fully grasps the subtle challenges posed by the topic.

3. I will ask each person in the class to lead a brief, emphasis on the word brief, discussion of a chapter in one of our books. More details as we begin to discuss each book among our group of five for this course. The big point is that each of YOU will be playing a leadership role in this class, even if just for a very short time.

4. I will share a new project that I have developed with three colleagues for Harvard freshmen that will be definitely implemented this coming spring of 2014. Working closely with Dean Tom Dingman, the Harvard Freshmen Dean; Ms. Katie Steele, Director of Programming for Freshmen; and my good friend and colleague Professor Howard Gardner, here at The Graduate School of Education, we have created a brand new discussion groups program for all Harvard freshmen. They participate on an entirely voluntary basis. The topics for these groups of freshmen are NON-ACADEMIC. In fact, that is the whole point. More details in class.

The value of our discussing this idea in class is that such student discussion group are emphatically NOT UNIQUE TO HARVARD. ANY institution, college or university, could

implement this same project, and it cost very little if anything. In our class we will discuss how to improve this real world program, for the spring of 2014, what value it offers to students, how it might help some colleges to increase their student retention, and generally the value of organizing discussions on campus around certain non-academic topics.

5. A new research project, that I am co-Directing with friend and colleague Prof. Howard Gardner, will explore the idea of “Liberal Arts for the 21st Century..” Put briefly, we will be posing the question of how could and should traditional “liberal arts” as presented in colleges, change for the coming generation? This discussion will give each of you in this class an opportunity to help to shape a large scale project in its earliest stages.

6. I am leading another new research project, which brings together campus leaders from Brown, Duke, Georgetown, and Harvard. We ask the question, “how can these highly selective campuses help First Generation students, the first in their families to go to college, to succeed at such highly selective campuses? Again this project is fairly new and everyone in this class who wishes, will have a chance to make constructive suggestions.

These six additional features are topics I hope we will cover in our class, in addition to all of the regular readings and discussions. I hope you find them appealing -- I am intentionally choosing them since they are not the sort of activities or challenges you would read about in any textbook.

5. **GRADING FOR THIS CLASS:** Final grades will be based 10 percent on the each of the three short papers, 20 percent on class participation and “in – class contributions” such as debates and small group presentations, and 50 percent on your final research paper. I hope this breakdown of the final grade helps to emphasize the seriousness of the final, research paper, Several students have, in past years, actually published their final papers in journals for a wider, higher education audience.

6. This class will rely heavily on SIX books, plus many journal articles and other printed documents. Three are very new. They are listed on the next pages of this syllabus, down below, and should be available soon at the Harvard Coop Bookstore. (or AMAZON.com or anywhere else you wish to buy them). Each student should get all six. The total cost of all six books (in paperback when available) should not be approximately \$100 - \$150 maximum for the entire semester. I will distribute MANY additional handouts, printed out, hard copy, in our classes, for you to keep. Plus John will be posting some of the readings on the course Website (which we will discuss in class). In fact, this distribution of extra materials for you to read will begin on the very first day. Both John and I will also distribute some additional handouts and readings electronically, via e-mail to everyone in the class. Therefore we will get a full list of e-mail addresses for everyone in the class. As

soon as possible. You can expect to get additional readings from me on a regular basis. I always will try to give you at least one full week of advance notice on ALL readings., and often two to three weeks.

Textbooks: The six books we will use in this class are as follows. I have ordered all six for the Harvard Coop:

1. David Kirp. Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line. By David Kirp. Harvard University Press. 2004. PAPERBACK EDITION.
2. William G. Bowen, Michael McPherson, and Matt Chingos. Crossing the Finish Line: Graduation from Public Universities. Princeton Univ. Press. 2011. GET PAPERBACK.
3. Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa. Limited Learning on College Campuses. 2011. University of Chicago Press. GET THE PAPERBACK EDITION.
4. Richard J. Light. Making the Most of College: Students Speak their Minds. (Harvard University Press. 2006). Get PAPERBACK EDITION.
5. William G. Bowen. Technology and Productivity in Higher Education (2013, Princeton Univ. Press).
6. Derek C. Bok. Higher Education in America. (Fall, 2013. Princeton Univ. Press).

TOPICS FOR EACH CLASS, AND KEY READINGS FOR EACH CLASS.

WEEK BY WEEK, CLASS BY CLASS READINGS, ARE GIVEN BELOW. MANY MORE WILL BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER, BOTH ELECTRONICALLY AND WITH HARD COPY.

Attached is a class-by-class reading list for the first twelve weeks. I expect to add some additional readings over the semester as I learn more about who is in the class. Our selection of readings for later in the semester will depend in part upon who signs up to take this class. This syllabus and list of five required books offer a starting point for our first eleven sessions.

TUES, Sept. 3rd. : FIRST CLASS. NO ADVANCE READING ASSIGNMENT.

TOPIC: Introduction and overview of course. Early discussions about research design challenges. I will hand out a questionnaire for class discussion at this first class session, about key facts in American Higher Education. We will discuss the questionnaire and some of its potential implications. There is no advance reading assignment for this first class. **I WILL HAND OUT A SERIES OF QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASS TO ANSWER AND THEN DISCUSS THE ANSWERS. DOING THIS EXERCISE SHOULD BRING EVERYONE UP TO THE SAME “FOOTING” ABOUT BASIC FACTS, PRINCIPLES, AND FEATURES OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION.**

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR SEPT. 9. IN OUR FIRST CLASS ON SEPT. 3, I WILL HAND OUT IN CLASS A BUNDLE OF READINGS FOR OUR SECOND CLASS ON SEPT. 9TH.

Sept. 9th:

TOPIC 1: The history of standardized testing. How standardized testing for colleges started. Who was involved, and why were the tests developed. How are they used now? How have they been used in the past fifty years? What are the plusses and the challenges of using exams such as the SAT and the ACT for admissions decisions, and perhaps for placement decisions for new students at colleges? Do standardized tests discriminate against certain subgroups of Americans? Minorities? Lower income students? Women? Any other groups? Or is the idea of discrimination a myth? Or perhaps it is a question of what one means by the word, “discrimination?”

TOPIC 2: What are future prospects for different types of campuses? Is the future of large, public universities very different or quite similar to the future of large, private research universities such as Harvard and Tulane and Vanderbilt and Stanford? How about the future of small, private liberal arts colleges? How about the future of women’s colleges? How about the future of Historically Black Colleges and Universities? This is not a topic that is routinely covered in texts, yet it certainly is important.

READING ASSIGNMENTS FOR SEPT. 9th:

In The Atlantic Monthly, August, 1995, read Nicholas LeMann, “The Great Sorting: The Structure of Success in America: Part I.

In The Atlantic Monthly, September, 1995, read Nicholas LeMann, The Structure of

Success in America: Part II.

Sept. 16th: MOOCS I. DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND MASSIVE, OPEN, ONLINE COURSES IN COLLEGS AND UNIVERSITIES..

Readings for Sept. 16th:

1. Nathan Harden. **“The End of the University as we Know It.** The American Interest Magazine. Feb., 2013.
2. William G. Bowen. **“Technology and Productivity in Higher Education.”** (Summer, 2013. Princeton University Press). Read entire book. It is not long at all.
3. Lawrence Bacow. **“Presentation to the Teagle Foundation Convening on the future of Learning at Different Colleges and Universities. Spring, 2013.**
ONLINE FROM THE TEAGLE FOUNDATION.
4. OTHER readings will be posted online or shared via **e-mail** because they are very recent.

Sept. 23rd: MOOCS II. AN IN-CLASS SIMULATION. “APPIAN UNIVERSITY.”
EACH STUDENT PLAYS A ROLE IN A FULL CLASS DISCUSSION.

READINGS FOR SEPT. 23rd:

Sept. 30th: ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: What it means. Who cares about it. How to think about doing it. What are different ways to do assessment at colleges and universities. What formats are most helpful for campus leaders. How to do it most effectively. Future directions for assessment.

Topic: Assessment and Accountability. What are different definitions of these words? How

are different colleges and universities, both public and private, both more selective and less selective, handling this topic? What role does this topic play in Accreditation of colleges and universities? I (Richard Light) will do a class presentation of different ways of thinking about the concept of Assessment. Plus we will together go over a large group of examples of how to ACTUALLY DO ASSESSMENT. And how to interpret the findings from a large, sustained Assessment Project at one university.

READING ASSIGNMENT for Sept. 30:

Read the entire book, Making the Most of College: Students Speak their Minds. This is one example of a large scale research effort, undertaken for the specific purpose of “understanding, assessing, and ultimately improving the quality of the education we offer at college.” It was based at Harvard, yet it included 25 diverse colleges and universities, from Yale and Princeton and MIT to Williams and Amherst, and to UMass Amherst and UMass Boston and Bunker Hill Community College. In other words, the results presented in this book are NOT JUST A HARVARD STORY. THEY APPLY TO HUNDREDS OF VERY DIFFERENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AS WELL. I will give many examples of this point in class during my in-class presentation and the class discussion, after you have read this book.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR CLASS ON SEPT. 30th:

1. What are the strengths of taking the approach to assessment research that the book describes?
2. What are the weaknesses?
3. If ANY person or group undertakes research on a college campus with the goal of enhancing the quality of education, what is the best kind of research design to use if possible?
4. What is the most effective way of presenting the findings SO THAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY USEFUL AND THAT COLLEGE LEADERS AND FACULTY ADOPT THEM TO HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED?
5. The assessment techniques, and findings, that I report in this book are NOT HEAVILY QUANTITATIVE AT ALL. In fact, they are overwhelmingly qualitative. Can YOU come up with just two or three useful, feasible, easy, and inexpensive projects to measure student learning, student success, or the “value added” offered by a college to all of its students, that is SIMPLE YET ACTUALLY QUANTITATIVE IN STYLE, rather than qualitative such as the examples in this book?
6. Assuming the core “findings” in this book are reasonable to apply for a large and diverse group of campuses, what are four policy proposals that you might make for helping students to “succeed” on YOUR campus, wherever and whatever that campus may be?

The book takes about five to seven hours to read carefully from cover to cover. I hope everyone will complete it for this class. I plan to cover all the main topics in this book, including capitalizing on background differences that students increasingly bring to campuses, in our class discussion.

OCT. 7th:

TOPIC: Organizing and Designing Major Policy Projects on Campuses to Bring About Change.

Three examples. First example is the Howard Gardner and Richard Light “Liberal Arts for the 21st Century” project, just now starting up. Second example is the Brown, Duke, Georgetown and Harvard project that is targeting ways to “help First Generation College Students to succeed, both inside the classroom and outside, on highly selective campuses...” Third example is “Reflecting On Your Life,” a non-academic discussion program for freshmen initiated at Harvard College, and now being picked up, tweaked, and adopted at a variety of other campuses. Each of these is a recent initiative, basically a new enterprise. We will discuss “what it takes” to begin such projects. What are some predictable obstacles? What are key points to keep in mind, and key questions to answer, if YOU someday wish to develop a research project on any campus where you work?

Readings: for Oct. 7th:

1. Howard Gardner and Richard Light. “Liberal Arts and Sciences for the 21st Century.” Proposal and Project Outline. Summer, 2013. Both the longer version and the shorter version.
2. Rachel Gable. “Results from the First Round of First Generation Student Interviews on a Highly Selective Campus, with possible Policy Implications.” Summer, 2013.

OCT. 14th. NO CLASS. HARVARD IS CLOSED FOR COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY.

Oct. 21:

DEBATES. We will have five debates in this class session. In each debate, two “teams,” each consisting of either two or three class members, will each briefly present their “side” of a controversial topic facing higher education’s future. Then the entire class will have the opportunity to ask members of BOTH teams whatever questions the debates have raised. These debates will require a substantial amount of advance preparation for each “team.”

So please be prepared to meet outside of class to prepare – and everyone will be assigned to a “team” and to a “topic” two weeks in advance so everyone and each “team” has adequate time to prepare. The whole point of these in-class debates is to actively engage the entire class around evidence.

EXAMPLES OF TOPICS FROM WHICH WE WILL CHOOSE OUR FIVE DEBATES. MEMBERS OF THE CLASS WILL HAVE A SAY IN OUR CHOICES:

Possible Topics for S-123 Class debates for Fall, 2013-2014. We will choose five of them:

Topic for Debate #1: (a) The future of American private liberal arts colleges is BRIGHT - - versus (b) “The future of American private liberal arts colleges is BLEAK. AND WHY.

Topic for Debate #2: Building on our readings about the history of the SAT exams, campuses (a) should make significant adjustments when interpreting SAT scores from different kinds of students from different backgrounds, versus (b) campuses should not make adjustments that are major because that ultimately defeats the whole point of having a common standardized test such as the SAT.

Topic for Debate #3: What is the appropriate future role for the Federal Government in setting minimal standards for colleges and universities? The Federal “No Child Left Behind” Act, supported widely across the political spectrum when it was first proposed and then written into law, mandated standardized testing in America’s Public Schools. There is right now a Federal Commission, which includes some distinguished Academics, which is exploring the question of whether it is appropriate for the Federal Government to mandate minimal performance standards for colleges and universities.

So that leads to the debatable question, (a) YES it is entirely appropriate when spending taxpayers money to expect some minimal level of accountability, which would be measured in some appropriate way by an appropriate series of tests of college students; versus (b) NO it is inappropriate for the Federal Government to intrude on college and university prerogatives, and it is inappropriate for the Federal Government to require testing of students to see what they are learning and what they know. Just because taxpayers’ money is subsidizing those same colleges and universities doesn’t give the Federal Government any regulatory role that should require testing of students.

Topic for Debate #4:

The future of women’s colleges is bright, vs. the future of women’s colleges is grim.

Additional Potential Debate Options, and the Class Members will have the chance to shape our final choices:

- #5. Should institutions direct their finite financial resources towards merit or need-based aid? Is this answer different for public and private institutions?
- #6. What role should diversity in ethnic background vs. economic background factor in admissions decisions? Are they of roughly similar importance to a college or university? To society?
- #7. Should domestic applicants be given priority over international applicants, in all “close calls” when it comes to admissions? Is the answer the same at public and private institutions?
- #8. What responsibility, if any, do highly selective private institutions have to spend their endowments on socially beneficial goals (need-based aid, community improvements, etc)?
- #9. Should academic remediation be confined to 2-year institutions (i.e. students would need to complete remedial requirements at a community college before enrolling in a 4-year institution)?
- #10. Do US News and World Report rankings lead to an improved collegiate experience for students? Or, do the USNWR rankings accurately reflect the quality of education that students receive at an institution?
- #11. Should higher education have ANY kind of formal, high stakes public accountability system similar to No Child Left Behind?

Oct. 28th:

**TOPIC: CASE STUDIES OF ACTUAL CAMPUS CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS -
WHAT DID THEY DO?**

CORE QUESTION: Is the management, and the quality, and the way colleges are being run, increasingly influenced by commercial considerations? As students and their parents who often pay the tuition become increasingly “consumerist” in their expectations of colleges, are colleges responding constructively, or “prostituting” themselves in ways that we might find offensive? What can we learn from five specific, and detailed, case studies of colleges that have responded to these “consumerist” pressures in different ways?

Readings for Oct. 28th:

Read the following FIVE Case Studies in the book by David Kirp, “Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Commercialization of Higher Education.” Students working in small groups will be asked to make short (five minutes) presentations for developing productive class discussion. Details will be given at least two weeks in advance so everyone in class can prepare to focus on their one, particular Chapter to emphasize in their reading, so each person in the room can help to advance our class discussion.

Case Studies to Read:

1. **The University of Chicago.** Turning around a campus that is one of America’s truly great universities, yet it had a reputation ten years ago of a campus “where fun goes to die.” Should the campus leadership change the style of campus life, of course requirements, of the way each student’s campus experience is organized?

2. **Dickinson College.** Faced with declining numbers of applications and a steady erosion in the “quality” of the students who are applying, can a new president of a good liberal arts college “turn it around?” What are some ways to even consider doing this? How would we measure success?

3. **NYU.** A large private urban university, NYU, wants to go from GOOD TO GREAT. An energetic leader initiates some controversial changes. Is this a promising strategy? What impact might such a strategy actually have on faculty members, on administrative staff members, and on students? What actually happened at NYU over the past ten years? What can other campuses learn from their experience?

4. **University of Virginia.** UVA’s financial receipts from the state of Virginia’s taxpayers were declining, year after year, as a proportion of their total operating budget. Their leadership initiated a proposal to “privatize” the Darden School, not the entire UVA enterprise. What happened? Can other campuses learn from this experience? Just a few months ago UCLA and UC Berkeley made public efforts to initiate a process that could lead to “privatization.” What can any public university learn from the UVA Darden School experience? What has come of the UVA Darden School of Business now?

5. **The University of Southern California.** USC is a large private university that was not really considered distinguished ten or twenty years ago. By changing their “revenue management” strategies, a new leadership hoped to bring them to genuine distinction. This new revenue management process, some of which was adopted from the world of business, was not always popular on campus. What did they do, and what is the result? What can other campuses learn from the USC experience?

Nov. 4. What are students learning now? How engaged are they on different kinds of campuses? Are students being “challenged enough?” How do we know? Do we believe the findings?

READING for Nov. 4.

Read the entire book “Academically Adrift” by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa. (2011. University of Chicago Press). It is a not terribly long, book length summary of a major project that received Editorial headlines and write-ups in the NYTimes, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal. This is because its findings were so surprising and distressing to many observers. I will distribute a group of specific questions to guide class discussion in advance of this class.

Nov. 11th. An exploration of America’s great PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES. How are they doing by a variety of reasonable criteria? What is the performance of flagship public universities compared with the performance of regional public campuses? How does knowing about Flagship public universities, and their effectiveness, influence the way we would advise students to choose and attend campuses when first applying, and then when deciding where to attend when options are available?

READING for Nov. 11.

Chapters 1 – 6 in William G. Bowen, Michael McPherson, and Matt Chingos. “Crossing the Finish Line: Graduation from Public Universities.” (2011. Princeton University Press). I will distribute a group of specific questions to guide class discussion in advance of this class.

Nov. 18. TOPIC: WHAT ARE THE BIG CHANGES WE CAN PREDICT FOR AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION, BASED ON ITS PAST?

READING FOR Nov. 18.

Read Chapters 1 – 9 in Derek C. Bok, “Higher Education in America.” (Sept., 2013. Princeton University Press). I will distribute a group of specific questions to guide class discussion in advance of this class.

Nov. 25. TOPIC: Helping ALL Students to Succeed at College. We will go over readings and suggestions for ways to help students who might come from very different backgrounds, whether to Princeton, a large Public University, a small liberal arts college, or even a Community College, to SUCCEED AT COLLEGE IF THEY ARE WILLING TO WORK AT IT.

Examples of Questions we will Discuss in Class on Nov. 25:

1. How important is the first year of college? How does what happens in first year affect overall graduation rates, and retention? How does the answer to this question vary among different colleges and universities?
2. What could be the role of ORIENTATION in strengthening a student’s probability of having a successful college experience?
3. What are FOUR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES or SERVICES that ANY college, rich or less rich, highly prestigious or perhaps a campus few people have heard of, ACTUALLY IMPLEMENT TO HELP AS MANY STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE TO SUCCEED?
4. Do any “special programs or accommodations” help certain subgroups of students to succeed at different kinds of colleges or universities? (Example: with growing numbers of First Generation College students now being admitted to highly selective research campuses, is there anything that campus administrators or faculty members

can do to enhance the success of First Generation students at such campuses? If yes, what are those things? Do many students actually want such special arrangements or accommodations?).

READINGS for Nov. 25:

- 1.** Sarah E. Turner. “Measuring College Success: Evidence and Policy Challenges.” Chapter in College Success: What It Means and How to Make it Happen.” Edited by Michael McPherson and Morton Schapiro. The College Board. 2008.
- 2.** “Freshman Readings: Class of 2011. “Faculty Conversations. . I will distribute this booklet to all students at least a week in advance.
- 3.** David W. Breneman. “Institutional Perspectives on Student Success.” In College Success. 2008.
- 4.** Michael McPherson, Morton Schapiro, and Francie Streich. “Financial Aid at Public Flagship Public Universities.” In College Success. 2008.
- 5.** Leonard Springer, Mary Elizabeth Stanne, and Samuel Donovan. “Measuring the Success of Small Group Learning in College-Level SMET teaching: A Meta-Analysis. In documents distributed by The National Research Council, 2007.
- 6.** Richard Light class handout. “The Upsetting Handout for Advisors and Instructors at Any College.” Please read in advance, and we will discuss this in class.

Dec. 2. FINAL CLASS SECTION.

I always like to leave on, final class session to be sure we will be able to spend class time on important topics that YOU, the students, feel haven’t been fully covered. The specific list of topics and readings for this final class will be flexible, and we will decide this four weeks ahead so we can have several helpful readings.

Examples of topics to either explore anew, or to explore further if we have not given each of them enough time in class:

1. What is The National Survey of Student Engagement? How can colleges best use it?
2. What is the COACHE project and survey of junior faculty members across America? How can colleges best use it?
3. What is the relationship between technology and learning? Do students learn more or less when they use laptops in class? Do students learn more or less when instructors use powerpoint presentations? What is the concrete and rigorous evidence?
4. College and university ranking systems. We all know about the U. S. News and World Report ranking system. There are others as well. How are these useful? How might they be destructive in any way? How might they be improved?

FINAL PAPER:

Your approximately 20 page final course paper is due on WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013. No extensions. Of course if a paper is submitted EARLY, that is very welcome. And I will grade it as early as possible so that you get it back with reasonably quick feedback as well as your final course grade.