
REVIEWS

William G. Bowen and Harold T. Shapiro, eds. *Universities and their Leadership*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998. 268p.

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Much of this volume — essays gathered on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Princeton — serves as a primer for the academic reader who wishes to understand contemporary higher education. Written in an accessible style with concrete examples, it stimulates a general reader. The authors of the essays are largely presidents or presidents emeriti. For instance, Frank Rhodes, the former leader of Cornell, provides a dandy overview in “The University and Its Critics” that should be required reading for university faculty. Marred slightly by the repeated references to the celebratory occasion (e.g., “Princeton has done that superbly”), the essay provides a long view of higher education in America. Even Princeton though is caught in the paradox of high public expectations and low public confidence. Research universities especially face attacks on their programs, curricula, and faculties. To counter, universities must, in his opinion, link research to the undergraduate experience; affirm that service is a social obligation; and remember that teaching is a “moral vocation” (9).

Accreditation agencies concerned about the lack of coherence and connections in the curriculum would applaud his notion that responsibility for the curriculum must be wrested from individuals and placed in the hands of a community of faculty who should ask questions such as “what is the point of this class?” and what should our graduates “be expected to know and be able to do” (11). Rhodes quotes liberally from President Woodrow Wilson — in his role as Princeton’s President — and these are gems: e.g., “it’s easier to move a graveyard than revise the curriculum.”

Mark Trow draws, too, on the themes of accountability and autonomy in the next, more comprehensive, essay, although he ranges widely from quality of faculty to internal financial audits. He reminds institutions that they are responsible for critical self-examinations, and it is this process of examination that accrediting bodies should evaluate. He calls measures of educational outcomes “spurious,” given that the university’s impact on students emerges over a lifetime and in vari-

ous forms. He notes, too, that “best practices” of universities are not typically gathered or widely distributed — a role accrediting bodies could take on.

The next section spotlights “The Presidency,” and although the essays here continue in a tone of speechifying, they illuminate the changing nature of the prime leadership role: moving from manager, taskmaster and entrepreneur, “philosopher king (or queen)” (69) to one who balances the interests of a wide range of institutional stakeholders. Not surprisingly, the presidential authors write sympathetically of the CEO’s role; again, faculty would benefit from hearing the story of the day-to-day working hours of their leaders in an era when presidents are often satirized as “gutless politicians or power-hungry bureaucrats” (105).

The remaining two sections of the collection are “The Faculty” and “The Planning and Oversight of Science.” Henry Rosovsky, author of *The University: An Owner’s Manual*, kicks off the section on faculty by arguing that practice of a professional code of conduct and ethics among faculty is not to be taken as self-evident. He and co-author Ameer offer cases to stimulate discussions among faculty, one of them the Stanford debate on the Western Civilization course. Bemoaning the rise of individualism and the fall of the apprentice/mentor model in the professional ranks, they fail to acknowledge the effect of overpriced real estate, long commutes to campus, and increased technology on the campus “community.” Especially in urban areas, faculty may find themselves priced out of the close-to-campus housing market and forced to spend time commuting or setting up a home office. The effect may be a faculty with less sense of “community.” Faculty may take umbrage that when the essays do turn to them as subject, that the topic is their ethical conduct.

Oliver Fulton offers a cross-cultural perspective of academe, drawing on survey research in England, Sweden, Netherlands, and Germany, most notably in areas of job satisfaction, research, and involvement in teaching. He concludes that continuity in the academic profession cannot be taken for granted. In other words, a university is not necessarily a university. Having taught abroad, I can attest to the fact that curriculum, faculty roles, and even the daily work can vary widely from U.S. higher education.

Daniel Kevles explores the history of federal support of scientific research conducted at universities, beginning in the 1890s, in an entertaining and interesting narrative. Two other essays follow, citing a lack of scientific leadership.

The greatest weakness of this collection is that six of the ten essays touch peripherally on leadership. Given the collection’s title, might the book have ended earlier or included other essays? Yes. Had the section on faculty dealt with issues of faculty governance, for instance, it would have been more germane to the topic

of “leadership.” As is, the collection contains two or three stellar essays well worth reading. ♦