

The Pew Higher Education Roundtable

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The Pew Higher Education Roundtable is a national laboratory that seeks to identify and test "best practices" for academic restructuring. Sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and based at the University of Pennsylvania's Institute for Research on Higher Education, the Roundtable's member institutions include colleges and universities from all parts of the nation, representing a broad range of institutional size and mission.

The **original** mandate of the Pew Higher Education Roundtable was to foster an informed national dialogue on the challenges and opportunities facing American colleges and universities. In 1988, the Roundtable began publication of *Policy Perspectives*, focusing on three central issues affecting higher education: cost, quality teaching and learning, and access. Through the voice of *Policy Perspectives*, the Pew Roundtable became a major contributor to the discourse on higher education policy and practice.

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In 1993, the Roundtable extended the scope of its efforts, beginning a series of campus-based roundtable discussions that sought to improve quality, contain costs, and sustain the values that define the learning communities of individual colleges and universities. The pilot phase of the new Pew Roundtable program involved 30 higher education institutions, including community colleges, liberal arts colleges, small research and comprehensive institutions, and major research universities.

The campus roundtable is at the core of the **Pew** Higher Education Roundtable program. Its premise is that a college or university gains strength both academically and operationally when its constituents speak collectively and engage in constructive dialogue. It serves as a forum both for voicing individual thoughts on the challenges facing an institution and for forming a collective understanding of those challenges within the campus community. A campus roundtable is not a standing committee or an implementa-

tion group, but rather a community seminar in which participants are encouraged to explore ideas together without becoming encumbered by the consideration of obstacles or operations.

An institution typically engages the Pew Roundtable for two roundtable sessions, held on campus about four to six weeks apart. A senior liaison visits each campus prior to the first roundtable meeting. Together with an institution's leadership group, the senior liaison helps to determine the focus and goals of the roundtable process, exploring the key issues that confront the campus and considering how the roundtable's discussions might best support an ongoing or a newly established institutional planning effort. This conversation provides the basis for the selection of roundtable participants from the campus community as well as the selection of an external facilitator. The senior liaison continues to maintain contact with the institution to discuss what effect the roundtable has had on the campus and to consider how the institution can sustain the momentum generated by the roundtable process.

In 1991 and 1992, a series of three special transatlantic roundtables was convened with representatives from 12 countries on both sides of the Atlantic. The conversation, which assessed the forces of change affecting higher education institutions internationally, was the basis of the June 1993 issue of *Policy Perspectives*, "A Transatlantic Dialogue." The Roundtable has recently begun working with the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) to engage institutions in trustee-faculty roundtables. The AGB-Pew Roundtable provides campuses with a "jump start" for restructuring by developing a better understanding of how and why to restructure; defining the roles of trustees, senior officers, and faculty leaders; developing a restructuring agenda; and outlining a set of "next steps" for implementation.

Policy Perspectives continues to function as the public voice of the Pew Roundtable, but its contents now derive from a broader base of experience as the program continues to work with a growing number of institutions seeking to address change. The Pew Higher Education Roundtable provides an increasingly interactive network of institutions and individuals with first-hand experience with the processes of academic restructuring.

For more information about the Pew Higher Education Roundtable, contact the Institute for Research on Higher Education, 4200 Pine Street, 5A, Philadelphia, PA 19104-4090. Phone: (215) 898-4585. Fax: (215) 898-9876. E-mail: pp-requests@irhe.upenn.edu.
