

measuring them, the report says. And the commission says that many data systems cannot currently answer such key questions as how many students who enter higher education emerge with a degree, how long does it take students to reach different levels of attainment, are student aid resources sufficient to help low-income students enroll and graduate, and are students learning what they need to know.

Some states do a good job creating the right kind of accountability systems, the report says. It praises the “Closing the Gaps” effort in Texas, which aims to increase college-going and graduation rates in that state by 2015. Kentucky is also praised for using five key measures—such as whether more Kentuckians are prepared for higher education, and the extent to which local communities benefit from the state’s colleges—to review the state’s higher education system.

States that set up good accountability systems should then use them to help set priorities and budgets, the report says. But it also warns against inflated expectations about how accountability will change the budget process. “It is wishful thinking to imagine that additional public investment will make it easy to achieve state and national higher education goals. The most important financial resource is not ‘new money,’ but existing investments,” the report says.

Similarly, the report adds: “It is wishful thinking to imagine that productivity gains can make quality higher education substantially less expensive or eliminate the need for additional investment. Educating more people to a higher level is valuable; it will not miraculously become free.”

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What’s in a Name? How Universities Sow Confusion and Cheapen Academe

PHILIP G. ALTBACH

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For the past several decades, “naming rights” have proliferated in American higher education. While by no means a new phenomenon, the power of names is going to extraordinary lengths. In this, academe is accompanying trends in society in the era of the Fleet Center and Gillette Stadium. Anything to eke an extra dollar out of donors is fair game. Far be it from me to criticize needed efforts to raise funds at a time of fiscal constraints, but things have gotten a bit out of hand.

Universities and colleges have long been named after

donors—think of Harvard, Yale, Brown, and many others. By today’s standards, John Harvard would hardly get a bench named after him given the modesty of his gift of books for the library back in the 17th century. At least one institution, Rowan University of New Jersey, changed its name when someone made a large donation—the old title was Glassboro State College. Buildings have traditionally been named after people—distinguished scholars, visionary academic leaders, and recently, big donors.

“Old Main” and Bascom Hall are indicative of a bygone age when place and merit were recognized. Now we have the Gloria and Jake Smith Administration Pavilion and the McGinty Family Chemistry Center. Many schools give donor names to class and seminar rooms. More than one institution of higher education puts names on its chairs—the kind that one sits in rather than endowed professorships. Professorships have long been named for donors of endowments—but some of the donors who have put their names on chairs raise eyebrows—the FedEx chair and many others. No doubt there is an Enron chair still out there somewhere.

Donors love to have their names, or the names of parents or other relatives, on buildings, schools, institutions, professorships, and the like.

A major trend is naming colleges and schools within universities. We have long had the Wharton School, the nationally known business school of the University of Pennsylvania; Boalt Hall, the law school of the University of California at Berkeley; and the JFK School of Government at Harvard. These schools have, over time, achieved an image of their own, separate from the universities at which they are located. They are “name brands.” Now we have the Rossier, Steinhart, and Warner schools and hundreds of others—these happen to be the education faculties at the University of Southern California, New York University, and the University of Rochester, respectively. These schools are not recognized on their own, and they are unlikely to be in the future. Yet, many at these institutions refer to them as the “Rossier School”—without referring to the function or the home institution. Beyond a block from the campus, few would know anything about it.

BRANDING AND CONFUSING

Why is all of this happening now? The main motivation for the naming frenzy is, of course, to raise money. Donors love to have their names, or the names of parents or other relatives, on buildings, schools, institutions, professorships, and the like. Increasingly, corporations and other businesses also like to benefit from having their names on educational facilities. At one time, there were limits on what could be named. Today, there seem to be none at all. If something does not have a name, it is up for grabs—a staircase, a pond, or a parking

garage. Once all of the major facilities have titles, lesser things go on the naming auction block. Development offices no doubt have long lists of campus assets that can be named for various sums. Colleges and universities, public and private, are all under increased pressure to raise money, and naming brings in cash.

Naming is also about branding—and in the case of corporate naming, it is also about product placement. Corporations feel that they will benefit by having their names on an academic building or attached to a prestigious professorship. On campus, many feel that giving the business school or the college of agriculture a name will enhance its prestige and visibility. It is believed by academic decision makers that if people see that a donor has given enough to get such a school named, it must be very good. Top students will be attracted and other generous patrons will be lured.

In the era of “each tub on its own bottom,” where increasingly faculties and schools within universities are responsible for their own budgets, there is a tendency for the school to operate independently—and to seek to create its own identity separate from the university. A well-known case is the Darden School (of business at the University of Virginia), which asked for, and received, considerable autonomy from the university in return for being responsible for its own budget. It even found donations to construct a new building—nicer than the usual state-funded facilities. In a few cases, where professional schools have established reputations, wealthy alumni, and entrepreneurial leadership, it is possible to build an identity and reputation separate from the university. But for most, even at excellent universities, such recognition is difficult or impossible to achieve.

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Separate branding weakens the focus, mission, and perhaps even the broader reputation of the institution as a whole. It confuses the public, and perhaps potential students. The tactic feeds the idea that the 21st century university is simply a confederation of independent entrepreneurial fiefdoms. Branding also strengthens the professional schools and ignores the core arts and sciences disciplines, where separate identities do not work. And except for a few schools at the very top of the hierarchy, the naming frenzy will not produce schools with separate reputations and drawing power in any case.

THE FUTURE

The trends we see now in the United States, and perhaps tomorrow in other countries, will inevitably weaken the concept of the university as an institution that is devoted to the search for truth and the transmission of knowledge, of an institution with almost a millennium of history. The naming frenzy is symbolic of the commercialization, bifurcation, and entrepreneurialism of the contemporary university. ■

A World-Class Country Without World-Class Higher Education: India's 21st Century Dilemma

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India is rushing headlong toward economic success and modernization, counting on high-tech industries such as information technology and biotechnology to propel the nation to prosperity. India's recent announcement that it would no longer produce unlicensed inexpensive generic pharmaceuticals bowed to the realities of the World Trade Organization while at the same time challenging the domestic drug industry to compete with the multinational firms. Unfortunately, India's weak higher education sector constitutes the Achilles' heel of this strategy. India's systematic disinvestment in higher education in recent years has yielded an academic system characterized by mediocrity, producing neither world-class research nor very many highly trained scholars, scientists, or managers to sustain high-tech development.

India's main competitors—especially China but also including Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea—are investing in large and differentiated higher education systems. They are providing access to large numbers of students at the bottom of the academic system while at the same time building some research-based universities that are able to compete with the world's best institutions. The recent London *Times Higher Education Supplement* ranking of the world's top 200 universities included 3 in China, 3 in Hong Kong, 3 in South Korea, 1 in Taiwan, and 1 (an Indian Institute of Technology at number 41—but the specific campus was not mentioned) in India.

These countries are positioning themselves for leadership in the knowledge-based economies of the coming era. There was a time when countries could achieve economic success with cheap labor and low-tech manufacturing. Low wages still help, but contemporary large-scale development requires a sophisticated and at least partly knowledge-based economy. India has chosen that path, but will find a major stumbling block in its generally poor university system.