Georgia’s Momentum
The magic of a popular lottery-funded college scholarship program

By Doug Cumming

Atlanta, Georgia

Georgia Governor Zell Miller recently returned to the mountain valley of his boyhood to address a joint meeting of college presidents and others representing the state’s public and private campuses.

It was a proud moment for Miller, whose widowed mama had hauled rocks from a creek long ago to build a home not far from the Brasstown Valley Resort and golf course where the higher education leaders were meeting. Now, as governor, Miller could take credit for the private development of the resort, having provided state land and low-interest bonds.

Given the surroundings—and the audience—this ex-Marine, hard-edged Democrat and once-and-future history professor, “in the twilight of his administration,” as he put it, could not resist the temptation to look back and toot his own horn.

Then he launched into a recitation of his education initiatives, during two terms of office since 1991, especially those higher-education endeavors that have endeared him to this particular audience and won national acclaim.

He talked of his lottery-funded HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) scholarship program, which awards in-state students who have at least a B average their full tuition and fees at a public campus, or $3,000 at a private Georgia campus, regardless of family income.

He talked of the six-percent-average merit raises he has given university system faculty for each of the past four years, bringing Georgia near the top of the South. And he cited his massive construction programs on campuses, his system-wide instructional technology investments and his state-business alliances to give industry a bigger bang from their university system.

But the thrust of Miller’s speech was neither nostalgia nor boasting. It was a plea to the next governor, addressed indirectly, to keep up the momentum of these last eight years. “For the job is far from finished,” said Miller, who at the end of his term-limit in January will be stepping his cowboy boots into teaching positions at all three of his alma maters: the University of Georgia, Emory University and the private, two-year Young Harris College in Brasstown Valley near the North Carolina border. “I hope that no one feels that we can rest on our laurels or spend a single second patting ourselves on the back,” he said.

The Democratic and Republican nominees contending to replace Miller have run against him for governor in the past, and lost. Now, in their campaigns heading for the November election, the two candidates both say Miller has done an excellent job with higher education, and they have no plans to change any of that legacy. They are especially careful to show continued on page 7

Governor Zell Miller’s HOPE scholarship program has helped thousands of Georgia college students.

In This Issue

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Vol. 6 No. 4 Fall 1998 Published by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

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AN INTERVIEW

JOHN G. SPERLING

John G. Sperling founded the Institute of Professional Development—"in the burgeoning field of for-profit higher education"—in 1973, while teaching at San Jose State University. He later began what became the University of Phoenix, which was accredited in 1979 by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. In five years ending last December, the University of Phoenix added 42 learning centers to 23 already in place. With more than 40,000 students, it is the largest accredited private university in the nation. This interview was conducted by National CrossTalk correspondent Carl Irving.

Carl Irving: Your new approaches to higher education have clearly appealed to older, working, more focused students. Does that mean you have exposed some fundamental flaws in traditional non-profit colleges and universities?

John Sperling: We started this in 1972–73. I had to create a model to address needs in a way that simply were not traditional. This offended traditionalists, some of whom were bitterly opposed to what I had created. They did everything they could to say (my approach) was illegitimate.

To oppose a measure we had introduced to deal with this issue, they argued...

"Clearly, as is widely recognized by those familiar with it, we have the nation's most sophisticated quality management system in higher education."

...that if restrictions weren't maintained, diploma mills would come into California. By implication we were a diploma mill. By implication we were a diploma mill. By implication we were a diploma mill.

People commute to Silicon Valley all the way from Santa Cruz. They have a three-hour commute every day. They have to worry about all sorts of things. They are adults leading complicated, or if not complicated, certainly time-constrained lives.

CI: Why didn't traditional institutions become aware of this?

JS: They might have become aware of this, but you've got to understand that institutions of higher education have been operated for the benefit of the faculty. The faculty, I suppose those at any college or university worthy of the name, thought of themselves as creators of new knowledge, and to do that you had to do research and writing, teaching being secondary.

For instance, when I was at Berkeley as a graduate student, the professor came in and he gave three lectures a week and maybe a seminar. That was it, and all the teaching was by myself and this army of my fellow teaching assistants.

I knew something about the subject matter, but I didn't know a thing about teaching. But I'm not so sure the professor knew any more about teaching than I did, because that was not the way he defined his professional life.

So why should they bother about this other population? For instance, they would have to teach at night. Well, they want to go home to study and write and don't want to be bothered with students.

CI: Did you find this to be true later, when you were a professor at San Jose State?

JS: San Jose State College moved from a normal school to a state university, and everyone wanted to write, to be published, to be recognized in his or her profession.

CI: But aren't researchers the best teachers?

JS: Knowledge now is so universally available that you would have to be creating some very esoteric new knowledge to be in a position where the students would be the ones to be the primary beneficiaries.

CI: Could you say that your faculty are out there every day learning on the job and thus are more proficient in what they teach?

JS: Well I did have one professor at Berkeley who influenced me greatly. He was a history professor who defined history as the usable part of the past, and I define each of the subject matters that we deal with at the University of Phoenix in terms of what is the usable part of that particular body of knowledge. Our students are busy. They are not here simply to expand their horizons; their horizons are pretty wide already.

They've formulated their basic philosophy in life. They've decided whether they're Democrats or Republicans. Their social sensitivities have been formed. To treat them like 17- or 18-year-olds was not only futile, it was demeaning. What they needed was the usable part of the bodies of knowledge that were included in any subject matter that was being dealt with.

CI: How do you define a BA? Granted, your students are more mature, but don't they also need some expansion of their minds?

JS: Remember, I'm talking about undergraduate study. It's only been in the last couple of years that we give lower-division courses. So all of our students had had their general education requirements before they came to us. Now that we've begun to deal with younger students, we have a dean of general education, who is responsible for the philosophy, the sociology, the English, the biology and the various other courses.

CI: Don't upper-division majors also take political science or economics?

JS: Not very often. But obviously we have economics, although we aren't training economists. We're training managers who have to have the knowledge of business and accounting. When you turn out a person whom you expect to be a competent manager, the two years of a full set of courses is just barely enough, in my opinion.

CI: How do you define a BA for a business major?

JS: If you look at the Chronicle of Higher Education or various higher ed "think tanks" or study centers they have determined that there's no consistent definition of a BA. It simply doesn't exist. A BA is what any college or university says it is, when a student receives a degree.

CI: Couldn't one argue that there is some general consensus beyond anything written in stone?

JS: No. There is no general consensus.

CI: How do you maintain standards regarding faculty, students, grading? How can you do this nationally, let alone overseas where you now intend to expand?

JS: We have a system that is scalable. It's replaceable. And it includes standardized curriculum, a method for hiring faculty, training faculty, including all of the skills we expect an instructor to have in a classroom, including judging skills and grading of student work.

Clearly, as is widely recognized by those familiar with it, we have the nation's most sophisticated quality management system in higher education.

CI: How do you arrive at that conclusion?

JS: We measure everything, and we have won several national awards for doing so with precision. We measure faculty performance every five or six weeks. We measure student performance every five or six weeks. We measure at least every quarter, the performance of academic counselors, of financial aid counselors, of the various administrative officers at each of the campuses.

We took the concept of continuous improvement and we applied it to our particular industry, which is higher education. It's not the same as Motorola, where they manufacture cell phones and computer chips. But Motorola in what you would call its soft areas—its research, administration, human resources—still strives for what they call "six sigma," and that's one error out of every million processes.

CI: But aren't Motorola's operations much less complex than yours?

JS: I don't think so. Research, development, administration—are those just as humanly complex as higher education?

CI: How about the huge regional differences and demands in this nation? Can you respond to these with a single concept?

JS: I think that in the U.S. we have a common culture. We haven't found that the material we prepare for Los Angeles is any different from what we need to prepare for Detroit or Seattle.

CI: What about overseas? continued next page
For-Profit Education

Will it force traditional colleges off their pedestals?

The Rapid Expansion of the University of Phoenix and other for-profit higher education institutions draws mostly positive comments from educators who have observed this phenomenon. They point out that Phoenix and others enroll many adults who have been over-looked or ignored by traditional colleges and universities.

Several people interviewed for this article welcomed the competitive push from the for-profits, because they believe that non-profit colleges and universities will need for localization.

Some worry about possible consequences later, if for-profit institutions funded by large corporations begin to design courses that monopolize online education.

The rising stock price of Apollo, the University of Phoenix’ parent corporation, reflects growing conviction on Wall Street that there is huge investment potential in for-profit higher education. Apollo became a public corporation in 1994. Between 1995 and 1998 Apollo’s stock rose in value from near zero to more than $43 per share, before sinking by “one big corporation becoming dominant,” he said. As of the 23 Cal State campuses must find a way to offer more access to degree work, by repackaging courses, offering them at nights, off-campus, in shorter time blocs and organized so “people can see a beginning, middle and end,” said Reed.

A nd there isn’t much time for America’s 3,600 campuses to change, warns A rthur Levine, president of Teachers College. The University of Phoenix has done all of us a favor,” said Charles Reed, chancellor of the nation’s largest public four-year system, the California State University. “Competition makes you look at yourself, makes you decide how you’re going to compete,” he said. The 23 Cal State campuses must find a way to offer more access to degree work, by repackaging courses, offering them at nights, off-campus, in shorter time blocs and organized so “people can see a beginning, middle and end,” said Reed.

Wall Street views the present $300 billion a year higher education “industry” as crippled by inefficient, over-priced and over-employed low-tech management.

College at Columbia University. “The ghost of Christmas future” confronts non-profit higher education, by way of low productivity, high prices, poor management and poor use of technology,” Levine said in an interview.

Higher education still doesn’t hear the warning bells... only 17 percent of college students now live full-time on campuses and range in age between 18 and 22,” Levine added. “A college that wants to change for what they aren’t using. They don’t want football, psychology counseling, religious services on Sunday.”

A according to Levine, Phoenix represents the “super end” of future for-profit higher education, and he warns that not-for-profit campuses will “fall off their pedestals” if they don’t change and provide more quality, service, convenience and low cost. Their present “neo-monopoly” on coursework could prove to be equally fragile, he said.

Lamentations won’t do any good, either, said Robert Zemsky, director of the Institute for Research on Higher Education at the University of Pennsylvania. The real danger may emerge as for-profit institutions earn high returns by attracting the most affluent students. Zemsky dismisses the criticism that for-profit institutions aim to attract “liberal arts and zero in on industry-smart subjects.”

The decision 35 to 40 years ago to provide higher education on a mass basis created huge “capacity systems” which had no place for any humanistic flower, said Zemsky. “A ll this talk—we’re going to lose something touchy-feely”—I’d like to know how much touchy-feely 500 students in an undergraduate class enjoy. There’s stronger interaction and intimacy on the Internet.”

For-profit schools attract working students who have neither time nor desire to enroll at traditional campuses, said Clara Lovett, president of Northern Arizona University. NAU is frequently cited for showing how a non-profit university can extend its offerings off campus. Lovett was among the first to develop a Coursera program, which envisions enrolling 95,000 students of Phoenix might develop a land-based program in China. But it would not be run by Americans. It would be run by Chinese. We would take the model to China and the Chinese would operate it.

The Chinese people in industry have endowed chair at Berkeley to take the post this past February] will be responsible for that, and I’m sure that there will be a need for localization.

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J S : I can see eventually the University of Phoenix might develop a land-based program in China. But it would not be run by Americans. It would be run by Chinese. We would take the model to China and the Chinese would operate it.

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schools at one time, we had six of them, and it's not the same population. Our average student is not working seven or eight years. He or she's got a family income of $55,000 to $60,000, so there's a great deal of difference between that individual and a 17-year-old coming in and trying to learn something about widgets.

We have a highly disciplined student population. They expect a lot from the instructor. Instructors don't get to slide. Students are much more demanding. If a student fails, probably the instructor doesn't want to lose the student. That's because students are required to be members of study groups, and a non-performing student in a study group is expelled by the group. And they always drop out if they are expelled.

C1: That's quite a jump—that students themselves dismiss a fellow student.

J S: When a student is asked to leave a study group, any other group will ask "Why didn't you keep this person?" Because he didn't do the work.

We've had a couple of court cases in which students say you required me to be a member of a study group, so you must provide me a study group. Our response is that it's plainly set forth in all of the documents—you'll be a member of a study group, and if you can't hack it, well then, it's your problem.

A lot of all of our students come from industry, and they're all working, and in almost every industry people work in groups. If you work at Intel, if somebody's dogging it, you're not going to put up with it, because your job is at risk.

C1: What portion of your students are funded by their employers?

J S: Seventy percent of them receive all, or a portion, from their employers. The total fully supported ranges close to half of all the students.

C1: Is it true that no higher education system has ever been profitable before?

J S: I think it's summed up in the fact that our system is designed as a production function, with specialized learning outcomes, and those outcomes we believe are equivalent to, or better than, the outcomes in traditional education. Then we design a system the least costly way. We deliver the services that achieve those outcomes.

C1: Some for-profit HMOs have damaged health care. Is there any parallel to fear here?

J S: No. First, we have a comprehensive quality assurance system in place. We deliver a service and we price it correctly. They don't have to come. So it's not analogous to an HMO.

C1: You were a professor of humanities at San Jose, and earned a Ph.D. from Cambridge in economic history. Don't you want to expand your academic offerings?

J S: We respond to the market. In California, let's say, it's probably the case that state funded systems won't be able to provide the educational services demanded by the population. So there should be probably several hundred thousand students a year who aren't able to gain admission to two-division programs as general education programs might be very popular there.

Once the general education requirement is met, students either enter into one of our professional programs or they transfer into a more traditional college, if they want to be a sociologist, a political scientist, study English or something else.

C1: At this point, are you cutting into enrollments of traditional institutions or serving a new market?

J S: I think what we are serving is a new market, and traditional institutions are coming into the market we defined and serve. Practically every college and university in California has what I call a core curriculum program based on the University of Phoenix design. Imitation is the greatest form of flattery.

C1: How about your programs to train teachers?

J S: We have fairly significant programs in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah. In California, institutions are trying to maintain their monopoly in teacher training. It's different from the battles of the early 1980s, attempting to protect the markets of established institutions.

C1: Do you expect these barriers to disappear?

J S: Economic analysis shows that the behavior of these colleges and universities is identical to those of industry when facing outside competition. A and Smith said, whenever you have two businessmen function, with specialized learning outcomes, and those outcomes we believe are equivalent to, or better than, the outcomes in traditional education. Then we design a system the least costly way. We deliver the services that achieve those outcomes.

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C1: I'll bet you are expanding your academic offerings.

J S: Yes. Some for-profit HMOs have damaged health care. Is there any parallel to fear here?

J S: Having taught at San Jose State for a long time, I can say that very few students graduate well rounded in western or global civilization. It was spotty at best. The only students who were well-rounded were the honor students in humanities programs, which constituted half of their coursework for two years.

BA's come in all shapes and sizes. I doubt that even, Princeton or Harvard produces well rounded students anymore. Students now are so sophisticated when they come in, and a lot of them have a very good idea of what they want. And if they're married, they want to study bits and bytes. If they're of a scientific bent, they want to dip right into that. And so there's so much information available, and so many venues are available that students can get educated in all sorts of ways.

I just don't think the old paradigms hold anymore. Knowledge has begun to democratize and commoditize, and it's just too widely available to say anyone will be able to say, "Come here and we'll provide it for you."

C1: Isn't that a worrisome thought?

J S: Life is worrisome. Life is adventure. If you think we're having trouble, how'd you like to be in Indonesia today?

C1: A history professor turned you on at Berkeley, right?

J S: I'm sure our instructors turn our students on.

C1: But you don't have a history professor.

J S: We have history surveys in lower-division general education and our instructors are quite competent.

C1: You're setting precedents that draw wide attention.

J S: What we do, we define very clearly. People know what we do, and we do it very well. So we'll take care of our knitting, and if the critics will take care of their knitting, the world will probably be a better place. 

There's a vast regulatory mechanism designed to protect markets, and our job is to find a way either to go over, around, or, if need be, knock 'em down.

Together, you have the beginning of monopoly. So they're simply behaving in a very predictable and rational way. They will use the law, they will use regulations, they will use every technique they can, to protect their market. That's the way the world operates.

C1: Do schools hire teachers in states where you are allowed to train them?

J S: They are snapped up as quickly as they are produced. These are post-baccalaureate programs. They all have B.A's and we award credentials.

C1: Do you try to overcome opposition?

J S: We have three full-time people dealing with regulatory barriers, two national lobbyists and 30 lobbyists at work in many states. There's a vast regulatory mechanism designed to protect markets, and our job is to find a way either to go over, around, or, if need be, knock 'em down.

The most recent case of that was in Pennsylvania, where there was a law against for-profit entities offering degrees. It took us three years but we got a law through the Pennsylvania legislature that rescinded that requirement.
Extended Learning
Colorado Electronic Community College offers online options

By Kathy Reeves Bracco

A ngie Boheler, a 33-year-old bank manager in Little Rock, Arkansas, could be a poster woman for the new part-time working adult college student. Though Boheler lives in Arkansas, she has taken Internet courses from Park College, in Missouri, and from the Colorado Electronic Community College. She will receive her bachelor’s degree in management and human services from Park College in December. Boheler began her undergraduate career at the University of Arkansas in 1985 but dropped out after one year. Since then, marriage and full-time jobs have occupied much of her time but she has continued to pursue a degree through evening and weekend classes, as well as online.

Two years ago, Boheler transferred her credits to Park College, a small institution outside Kansas City that operates 34 “extended learning” facilities in 19 different states mostly on military bases. One of these centers is at an Air Force base in Jacksonville, Arkansas, just a few miles from Boheler’s home.

Needling two accounting courses to complete her degree work, Boheler read about the Colorado Electronic Community College in brochures handed out at the air base. She signed up and has found the courses to be the best she has taken online. “You could finish your class and just go right to bed,” she said.

The Colorado Electronic Community College, founded in 1995, links together 12 Colorado public two-year colleges and offers both telecourses (telephone and video) and online instruction. Jerome Wartgow, retired chancellor of the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System, said the electronic college was started because so many Coloradans were looking for alternatives to traditional, on-campus higher education.

Many of the state’s 16 two-year colleges were offering a few online courses but “it seemed expensive for each college to do it alone,” Wartgow said. It made more sense to “share expenses, talent and expertise and put together a high-quality program.” So he persuaded the 12 colleges east of the Rocky Mountains to join together in the Colorado Electronic Community College, offering courses from each of the 12 consortium members.

A “leap of faith” was necessary for faculty members in one college to accept credits from another, Wartgow said, but he pointed out that community colleges have been arguing for years that four-year schools should accept community college credits at face value, so it seemed reasonable to expect faculty at the two-year colleges to do the same.

The Colorado Electronic Community College currently offers two degrees—a general associate of arts, which is now a telecourse but will be available online next spring, and an associate of applied science in business, offered entirely on the Internet.

Bob Norden, an instructor at the Community College of Denver, coordinates online courses for the electronic college. He teaches Principles of Accounting online and describes this kind of teaching as “much more challenging” than classroom instruction.

“Instead of the instructor, you have the ability to interact with the students—you can read their eyes, know when they’re falling behind, know when you need to stress a particular concept,” Norden said. “This is not as easy with online courses.”

Norden employs a “threaded discussion,” which he described as “a chalkboard that no one erases.” He begins with a question, encouraging all students to answer electronically. Norden then tries to respond quickly to each student and ask a second question.

Angie Boheler, who took Norden’s online accounting class, described him as a “wonderful professor...who seemed to communicate well” with the ten or 12 students enrolled at that time.

However, Norden said his “threaded discussion” approach takes a lot of time, and he worries when class size approaches the 25-student cap that has been set for Colorado Electronic Community College classes.

Arapahoe Community College, in suburban Denver, was chosen as home base for the telephone and video courses, to provide student services and award degrees. “We wanted to connect to a traditional college, with traditional faculty and a successful transfer function,” Wartgow said. “We wanted to avoid this being a stepchild.”

However, students pursuing the Associate of Applied Science in Business degree can enroll at any of the 12 consortium members, each of which provides its own student services and awards its own degrees.

This fall, more than 200 students are enrolled in the telecourses, while several hundred more are taking online work. About 87 percent of the students are from Colorado, but the number of people who are like Angie Boheler, in far-off Little Rock, is increasing.

Tuition is $115 per credit hour for online courses, $120 for telecourses, while on-campus tuition for Colorado community college students is only $55. However, Brad Wood, who took an online course last summer, said, “It’s more expensive, but the costs are more than offset by (low) transportation costs.”

“The parking at CCC online is great,” Wood added.

The typical Colorado Electronic Community College student is a 32-year-old female, with young children, who works full-time. Angie Boheler has no children but otherwise fits the description.

She likes Internet courses but finds them “more intense, because you have to work things out for yourself.” For instance, the instructor might not respond to an email question for a couple of days, “so you have to do a lot more reading to try to figure it out for yourself.”

Boheler thinks she has learned as much on the Internet as she has in her on-campus classes, because “in many respects you are teaching yourself.”

“I recommend online courses to everyone,” she said. “But you have to be disciplined. You have to tell yourself you’re going to try on that computer and spend the time, or it’s not going to work for you.”

Kathy Reeves Bracco is senior policy analyst at the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.
I n H i s 1 9 9 1 B o o k , C o m i n g to P u b -
lic Judgement, D a n i e l Y a n k e l o v i c h-
points out the growing gap in A m e-
rican society between experts and policy
elites, on one hand, and the general public,
on the other. He sees our political culture
as increasingly dominated by experts who
are disdainful of the public’s views on
important issues because the public usu-
ally lacks specific factual information.
Yankelovich—most assuredly no ad-
vocate of public ignorance—believes that
experts usually overvalue the importance
of information as knowledge; they assume
that accurate information always and
automatically leads to good judgement.
Yankelovich identifies the underpin-
ings of this culture of expertise: a se-
ries of assumptions, including these three:
• that the American people lack the
relevant knowledge, are concerned largely
with their own pocketbook interests, and
are likely to be apathetic to issues not
directly related to those interests;
• that where the public does have a
view it is likely to be reflected in public
opinion polls; and
• that on initiatives where public un-
derstanding and support are mandatory,
they can be achieved through “public
education,” a process in which knowl-
edgeable experts share some of their infor-
mation with the voters.

The assumption is that if the public
only had a better grasp of the facts as the
experts and policy elites see them, then
that public would align its own views with
those who know more. For the experts, the
formula for public consensus is often, “We
talk. They listen.”

A recent A m e r i c a n C o u n c i l on E d u-
ca t i o n (A C E ) report by two highly respected
colleagues, Stanley Ikenberry and Ter-
ry H article (Too L i t t l e K n o w l e d g e i s a
D a n g e r o u s T h i n g: W h a t t h e P u b l i c
T h i n k s a n d K n o w s A b o u t P a y i n g f o r
C o l l e g e), seems to reflect this “expert” perspec-
tive on the issues of college costs and prices.

The report interprets and describes the
results of polling and focus groups
sponsored by A C E . Respondents in
overwhelming numbers significantly
overestimated tuition costs; showed little
understanding of the magnitude of the na-
tional investment in student financial
aid, and, despite their anxieties about
college costs, spent little time thinking or
talking about higher education finance.

Furthermore the respondents did not
seem to understand the diverse missions
and pricing structures of higher education
institutions. The major conclusion, as
Yankelovich might have predicted, is the
need for more public education.

Although the report does discuss the
impoverishment of public college contain-
ment, its major thrust is that if the public had
more of the relevant facts at their fingertips,
their concerns would be mitigated, public
confidence would be strengthened and
Americans would be more willing to pay.

I have a problem with this inter-
pretation: The report may encourage
college and university leaders to place

A Good Read on Higher Education

Designing State Higher Education Systems for a New Century
By Richard C. Richardson Jr., Kathy Reeves Bruce, Patrick M. Callan and
Joni E. Finney

T his book is based on a three-year comparative study that examines
whether existing state higher education structures are adequate for
responding to the economic, social and technological challenges of the future.

The authors explain how various state governance structures influence
the establishment of priorities for higher education. Comparative case studies of
seven large and diverse state higher education systems are included.

The book concludes with a discussion of the policy implications of the research.

Shaping the Future: Higher Education in the 1990s
Edited by Patrick M. Callan and Joni E. Finney

S h a p e i n g t h e F u t u r e provides a thorough understanding of the challenges in financing higher education in America, including:
the overall health of public finance, both at the state and federal levels; the trends and policy implications in the financing of
higher education; and a perspective on the privatization of higher education.

The book also includes chapters on changes in higher education finance from 1990–1995 in California, Florida, Michigan,
Minnesota and New York.

Shaping the Future: Higher Education in the 1990s
October 1997/256 pages/Case 1-57356-1169/$29.95
American Council on Higher Education, Series in Higher Education
Oryx Press

A recent poll could reflect an important aspect of public opinion that was not in the survey. Similarly, the A C E poll shows
that the respondents do not see federal loans as student aid in the same way that they perceive work-study and grants—
even though the loans are subsidized. There is a distinction: A sk any recent graduate who’s paying off a $20,000 loan.

A nd this distinction may be more im-
portant to the public and public policy
than it is to to higher education and finan-
cial aid experts who track public subsidies.

Although I am concerned about the
emphasis of the A C E report, it does
contain an important message: We must
give greater attention to those who are
least well served by American higher edu-
cation. The report found that most of the
public does not know that the country
spends $50 billion a year on student aid.
But the reality is that most A mericans
learn what they need to know about using
the financial aid system when they need it,
not when it is presented to them as an
abstract question by pollsters.

Most A mericans learn, but not all, for
the report goes on to find that public under-
standing of financial aid is least among
those who most need the aid—low
income, and first generation students and
families. The report recognizes that
“opening the doors of higher education to
all A mericans, regardless of their econo-
ic status has been a central goal of policy
makers for three decades.”

I suggest that intensified outreach and
informational efforts specifically targeted
at those eligible for need-based aid could
have greater payoff for colleges and for
American society than would a more
generalized, public relations campaign
aimed at justifying college prices.

—P a t r i c k M . C a l l a n

— P a t r i c k M . C a l l a n
GEORGIA
continued from page 1
obedience to H.O.P.E., which has become politically sacrosanct since Miller lifted a $100,000 family income cap two years ago, making the program more popular with the affluent, whose children tend to get better grades, than with the poor.

They didn’t always speak so highly of Miller. Roy Barnes, a fellow Democrat in the state Senate when Miller presided there as lieutenant governor in the 1980s, had opposed the lottery when Miller beat him in the 1990 gubernatorial primary on a shred of anti-tax law that Bible-belt Georgia was ready for a lottery. Barnes, running as a conservative, had tried to pin a Wille Horton-type case on Miller’s service on the parole board 16 years earlier, but failed.

Guy Millner, the wealthy founder of a temporary-employment agency, who ran his first political race as the Republican challenger to Miller in 1994, felt the sting of Miller’s bare-fisted campaign style.

The Miller campaign taunted Millner for not allowing photographers into his $8-million mansion, Windcrotte, the former home of Coca Cola magnate Robert Woodruff. Millner snapped back that he would let a photographer in his house when Miller posed in front of “that $25-million golf course he built with (taxpayer) money,” referring to the Brasstown Valley Resort, “I paid for mine,” Millner added.

But the important question is not what these candidates really think of Zell Miller — the bad things they said back then, or the nice things they say now; it is whether the next governor will have the same kind of symbiotic, fine-tuned relationship Millner has had with the 48-year-old British-born chancellor of the University System of Georgia. He met Portch in the library, and pulled off a shelf a first-edition volume by Georgia author Flannery O’Connor. Portch had written a chapter on O’Connor in a book that grew out of his dissertation at Penn State. “That told me he’d done his homework,” Portch says, recalling the encounter.

Later, upstairs, the governor interviewed Portch about goals the younger man already seemed to have for Georgia’s system, and asked how long these changes would take. Portch, knowing the governor was facing a tough reelection, wittily gave him an answer that didn’t promise any election-year ammunition, but assumed Miller would be reelected: “Governor, it better not take any longer than four and half years.” From then on, they were on the same team.

Miller, although feisty about pushing his education agenda and, lately, jealous about guarding its place in Georgia history, clearly is charmed by Portch. Miller once called him the best thing that ever happened to Georgia—“including Zell Millner.”

But that’s not to say Millner isn’t still in charge. Portch’s most profitable skill may be his ability to read political power, anticipate it, influence it and work with it. “He’s the Wayne Gretzky of higher education, because he goes to where the puck will be, not where it is,” said state Senator Jack Hill, chairman of the state Senate’s higher education committee, borrowing from Portch’s own renowned stock of quotations.

The new chancellor memorized many of the legislators’ names and faces before hitting the ground, and calculated from those conservative Southern faces that he should immediately divest himself of his board. Not only does he call on legislators around the state with a disarming mix of British wit and adopted Southern ease, he also checks in with the gatekeepers who keep an eye on the legislators.

Early on, for instance, he stopped by a funky little rib shack in the poorer black section of Macon, outside Atlanta, to tap the wisdom of its owner, Winston Strickland. Strickland confirmed his prediction that Roy Barnes, then state representative from that area, would become the next speaker of the Georgia House.

Instead, Barnes is running for governor, so naturally, Portch recently dropped by the candidate’s law office in Marietta to talk about higher education. And when Republican candidate Millner was ahead in the polls and refusing to debate in the Republican primary earlier this year, he naturally dropped by Portch’s office to chat for more than an hour.

Perhaps surpassing his skills with legislators is Portch’s masterful touch with the 16 gubernatorial appointees comprising the Board of Regents, which is charged with setting policy and hiring the chancellor. “He’s changed the regents,” said Wayne Urbani, president of the Georgia conference of the American Association of University Professors. “They almost work for him.”

Hugh Hudson, who serves as Georgia’s A A U P executive secretary, has his own reading of Portch’s handling of the regents:

It’s hard to say, in this relationship, who calls the shots. Miller and Portch seemed to strike a complex bond in their first encounter, in March of 1994. The Board of Regents had selected but had not yet voted on Portch, then vice president of academic affairs for Wisconsin’s university system.

Miller delayed his trip to the Atlanta Braves’ spring training in Florida to receive Portch at the Governor’s Mansion, and possibly preempt the regents if he turned out to be unhappy with the candi-
from preceding page

named him two years ago to run the school board, to neutralize friction that followed the upset election of a volatile conservative Republican school superintendent in 1994. “Like when you start calling a woman beautiful,” I askon said, “she starts thinking of herself that way.”

Portch’s success has changed what it means to be one of the 34 campus presidents, 15 of whom have been named since Portch became chancellor, with three vacancies to be filled. He rewards their initiative by securing special funds from the legislature, beyond the regular budget, especially when their proposals fit his vision of multi-campus collaborations that give more visibility to campuses lower on the food chain.

But he also holds the presidents in check, to varying degrees, by asserting system needs. Even the president of the University of Georgia, Michael Adams, while granted the historical prerogatives of that highly visible office, bristles at the friction he feels from the system-wide office. In an interview, Adams praised Portch but also complained that the chancellor and his staff, who have “no alumni, no football team and no campus,” lack experience in running a university.

Before Portch’s arrival, the presidents often ran against the system, or as if they were autonomous.

The president of Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, for example, of whom Portch will say only that, by mutual agreement, it was time for Henry to move on. Henry, asked to comment, said he agrees with Portch. It is a further sign of Portch’s skill that he called Statesboro’s legislators ahead of time to say he was letting Henry go and that he has since unveiled an innovative plan to offer new Georgia Tech engineering degrees through Georgia Southern and other campuses in the southern half of the state.

Be careful not to overstate conflicts between an individual campus and the system, Portch advises. Indeed, he makes the case that he is actually looking for presidents who are aggressive—but in ways disciplined by the system’s needs and by hard data. “You only have a strong system if you have stronger institutions,” he said in an interview. “So I’m trying to strike a balance of a disciplined system approach, but innovative, entrepreneurial campuses, either individually or collectively.”

But if Portch has brought the various fiefdoms out of an almost medieval localization, he is worried now that the work is far from finished. In fact, serious new problems loom in the growing numbers of high school graduates who now aspire to college but are not academically prepared.

In the final days of this campaign season, Portch is galloping around like a young King Arthur to all 34 public campuses with the message that the war is not over; victory is not yet declared.

Portch’s message echoes that of Miller up at Brasstown Valley—let’s keep up the momentum. With the University System only halfway through its strategic plan and rising admission standards only beginning to sting, Portch is asking his colleges and universities to make their political interests known to Barnes and Millner. (A third candidate, Libertarian Jack Cashin, also is running for governor. Observers say Cashin will not win but could pull enough votes to affect whether Georgia gets another Democrat or its first Republican governor since Reconstruction.)

“I know crime is a popular issue,” Portch told the faculty at A t l a n t a M et r o p o l i t a n C o l l e g e during a recent visit to this struggling, two-year inner-city public school. He implored them to talk to the candidates and make them add higher education to their agendas.

The campaigns, largely shaped by TV ads initiated by Millner’s $167 million personal wealth, seem to focus instead on building more prisons and giving public school teachers smaller classes and the power to expel unruly students. “I can educate four or five here for the cost of one incarcerating one,” Portch said.

But Miller and Portch are having trouble getting their message out to a larger audience.

Higher education in Georgia may be a victim of its own success. Barnes and Millner have little to say about an area of state government that seems to be doing fine and offers no clear opportunities for either candidate to beat up on the other guy.

It’s a soft September morning in Athens at the University of Georgia, and sophomore Tom Ludlam relaxes before class in one of the rocking chairs on the classically styled porch of his Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house. A former high school football team captain and senior class president from a suburb of Atlanta, this 19-year-old is the very image of the easygoing gentleman-jock that has been the ideal of this flagship university for generations.

But wait. Ludlam is actually reading the classics, a textbook called “The Homeric Hymns.” A Latin and science star who scored an unbeatable 1600 on his SAT, Ludlam had been accepted through early action by Harvard University when he decided in the spring of his final high school year to attend Georgia instead. Probably the hardest decision he had ever made, the choice was not just about money, Ludlam said.

Money, though, turned out to be important, he admits. For the son of a Prudential Insurance executive and homemaker, Harvard would be expensive. At the University of Georgia, Ludlam benefits from a combination of two merit scholarships that actually turn college into a profit-making affair—everything’s paid for, including three summer trips out of the country, and he still will net a few thousand dollars each year.

While the larger of Ludlam’s two scholarships is from the university’s elite Foundation Fellows program, he acknowledges that he might not have picked Georgia if not for the more basic scholarship—HOPE.

The magic of Georgia’s HOPE scholarship seems to defy imitation, though President Clinton has tried with his $1,500 a year Merica’s HOPE tuition tax credit, and several states have started or are considering lottery-funded merit scholarships for college.

Georgia’s program, in all its details, seems a kind of jury-rigged contraption. Eligible students in university system schools get full tuition and fees; HOPE students in Georgia’s private colleges like Emory University or Morehouse College get $3,000, plus an equalization grant of $1,000, toward tuition. Those students need a B average in academic subjects...
from high school, and must maintain it each year of college to retain HOPE. Students in non-degree programs, primarily in the state’s 33 two-year technical schools, get HOPE grants regardless of their grades.

For all this complexity, HOPE has a simple message that Georgia residents have internalized—grades matter. Worries that this dollars-for-grades approach would pressure teachers to inflate grades have not been borne out, at least not at the high school level.

The Georgia Council for School Performance, a research office at the University of Georgia, by tracking grades with SAT scores, has found less grade inflation among HOPE students than among their peers nationally, perhaps because students are studying harder in academic courses to win the HOPE money.

No one doubts that HOPE has reversed a brain-drain by holding on to students like Tom Ludlam. As a result, much better students are attending—and even getting rejected by—the University of Georgia and Georgia Tech, the system’s academic giants.

The University of Georgia’s current freshman class has a projected average SAT score of 1,190, which is about 100 points higher than it was when HOPE started. A. Tanta’s premiere prep school, The Westminster Schools, sends about 50 percent more graduates to the university than it did before HOPE, and Ludlam’s Walton High, one of the highest-achieving public high schools in the state, sent 131 graduates to Georgia last year, more than any other metropolitan Atlanta high school.

The result of all this is a university where parties still rage and the Georgia Bulldogs football team still wins, but where smarter students wear the smiles of customers who have just won free merchandise. “This is the best decision I ever made,” says Corey Gill, 19-year-old foundation fellow, HOPE scholar and fraternity brother with Ludlam who turned down Duke and the University of Virginia to attend the University of Georgia as HOPE scholars.

Higher education in Georgia may be a victim of its own success. Neither gubernatorial candidate has much to say about an area of state government that seems to be doing fine and offers no clear opportunities for either candidate to beat up on the other guy.

But it is too early to say whether PREP or P–16 will have any effect at all, or whether a budget crunch or fall-off in lottery revenues will bring the changes in the university system to a screeching halt.

In 1989, a year before Zell Miller first ran for governor, he wrote a position paper of about 60 pages on his plans for Georgia, emphasizing his educational goals. Although Miller originally thought he could do what he needed to do in one term, and needlessly promised not to run for reelection, his foresight was remarkable.

In “The Georgia That Can Be A Blueprint for the 1990s,” Miller noted that faculty salaries were near the bottom in the South and needed to be boosted. He wanted to remove cost as a barrier to college attendance for qualified students. And he wanted the state’s colleges and universities to play a much larger role in economic development. Miller and Barnes have nothing close to such a plan for higher education. But they did answer questions on the subject put to them by the A. Tanta Regional Consortium for Higher Education, an association of 19 public and private metropolitan area campuses.

Barnes, in contrast, elaborated for five single-spread pages, and showed himself well acquainted with ICA P P, P–16 and other regents initiatives. As a legislator for 22 years with undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Georgia, Barnes is a consummate insider. “Education will be the number-one priority of a Barnes administration, and in order to do as much as we want to do in education, we’ve got to keep the economy strong,” he wrote. “The two are interdependent.”

That line could just as well have come from Zell Miller, who is supporting Barnes with a few low-key campaign appearances and occasional jabs at Miller’s TV ads.

But, finally, guessing how well either candidate will maintain Miller’s momentum is as foolish as guessing which one will win.

Last summer, Miller spoke at an emotionally charged ceremony at the University of Georgia’s chapel celebrating his appointment as the first holder of the university’s Phillip H. Abston J. R. Chair. “I have never entered a political campaign with any fear, and I’ve never entered a session of the General Assembly without being absolutely sure of myself,” said Miller, who will be teaching freshmen political science next semester. “But I worry, ‘Do I really reach these students of the 90s and touch their lives?’ I pray that I still can.”

If leaving politics for academia makes Miller nervous, it makes a lot of other Georgians a little nervous as well. ♦

Doug Cumming is an education reporter for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.
An Essential Partnership

The need for cooperation between K–12 and higher education systems

By Kati Hycock

As pressure mounts to demonstrate significant gains in student achievement, leaders in elementary and secondary education are growing increasingly nervous. They are especially worried by recent polling data suggesting that, absent clear evidence of better results, a majority of the public soon will support the diversion of public dollars to private education.

But one thing makes K–12 leaders even more nervous than the pressure of delivering significant improvements quickly: the growing understanding that their success might very well be dependent on what they do, but also on whether higher education will step up to its responsibilities.

Now, I realize that the last thing folks in higher education want to be told is that the very future of public K–12 education may depend on their willingness to act—and fast. Yet I’m afraid that this conclusion is inescapable when one analyzes the reform effort to date and the principal barriers that impede progress.

K–12 Standards-based Reform

Since the late 1980s, leaders in elementary and secondary education have adopted an approach to educational improvement known as standards-based reform. The core idea is simple: Education policymakers should agree on clear goals or “standards” for what students should know and be able to do at key grade levels, and those standards should drive virtually everything within the education system.

In the old system, of course, detailed prescriptions of educational inputs have dictated education. Reform leaders had to concentrate, first, on building the framework for such a system. So they appointed committees of educators and citizen representatives to fashion detailed standards statements. They invested substantial dollars in building assessments that would yield information on how students performed in relation to those standards. And they designed new accountability systems to hold schools accountable for progress in getting ever greater numbers of their students to the standards.

But as these new systems have begun to be put into place, reformers have run into two serious obstacles that many did not anticipate. First is the fact that many teachers are not well enough educated to help their students meet the new standards. Second is a problem of incentives at the secondary level: It turns out that, no matter how many incentives you offer it—and who should pay—is likely to intensify. And make no mistake about it: Obviously, there are a number of things that K–12 has to do differently if we are going to solve either the general quality problem or the inequitable distribution of teacher talent. But we cannot solve the core problem without serious attention by higher education. And that means not just schools of education, but the arts and science departments that do the content preparation. They, too, must be accountable for the quality of teacher preparation.

Some institutions of higher education are stepping up to this challenge. Among the more notable efforts are those at the University of Texas at El Paso, where both education and arts and science faculty have been working for several years to ensure that the students they produce are prepared to teach to the El Paso standards.

Incentives for Students

While young children are likely to respond eagerly to their teachers’ efforts to get them to higher levels of achievement, the situation is not nearly as easy in the high schools. Here, as at the collegiate level, the question for students often is, “Does this count?”

To make the higher learning embodied in the new standards count, teachers need to include standards-based assignments in their grade averages, and school districts need to include assessment results among requirements for graduation. But to make this shift (the shift from today’s subjective, widely varying individual teacher-generated standards to evaluation against state-adopted standards), these new standards have to count for somebody else: higher education. Because what matters to students and their parents is whether these new requirements count for purposes of admission and placement in college.

There are many important reasons why higher education should embrace— as well as work hard to influence—the movement toward standards. None is more compelling than the problem of remediation highlighted so well in the summer issue of National CrossTalk.

As the number of college students requiring remediation grows, the debate about who should offer it—and who should pay—is likely to intensify. And make no mistake about it: Unless higher education and K–12 work on a solution together, the numbers will continue to rise.
to grow.

Today's young people have an incredible appetite for higher education. Over the past two decades, the fraction of high school graduates entering postsecondary education has grown dramatically. Indeed, in the most recent years for which data are available, more than 72 percent of high school graduates went directly into higher education. A recent survey data suggest that that rate will increase in the next few years.

The basic problem, of course, is that while 72 percent of high school graduates may enter higher education, nowhere near 72 percent are prepared for higher education. Indeed, a large number of these college entrants have only the most rudimentary skills—a fact hardly surprising when you look at the data: Nearly half of the students who test in the bottom quartile of high school graduates will enter college within two years of graduation from high school.

The reform effort in K–12 offers a real opportunity to change this pattern—with clearer signals about what is important for students to learn, and concrete incentives for them to learn it. But the opportunity will be squandered if higher education doesn’t involve itself in the standard-setting and assessment development process in a much different way than it has to date.

In place of the individual faculty members who sit on K–12 standards-writing committees as “experts” in their disciplines, faculty participants must represent larger higher education interests—and their positions must be framed by institution-wide expectations of the knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in college without remediation.

In Maryland, the K–12 system and the two- and four-year colleges have collaborated almost from the beginning of the high school assessment development process. Content area faculty who sit on the various Maryland standards committees do so only after having clarified the University of Maryland System’s expectations for entering freshmen.

Knowing that the final standards they develop—and the assessment built around them—will inform graduation, admission and placement, they have been able to participate in the K–12 process in a wholly different manner than faculty who have participated on standards committees in other states.

This process should lead to fewer mixed signals and a much higher quality assessment because it truly will be owned by both K–12 and higher education. It should also have two other important benefits: 1) It will save money, because students will not have to be reassessed only a few months after leaving high school; and 2) it will provide real, concrete incentives for students to work hard to meet the new standards.

Next Steps

Neither of the steps advocated here is easy. But both are terribly important—to the effort to improve learning among all American students, but especially to the effort to close the achievement gap once and for all.

There also is concrete help available to those who want to walk this path. The individual campuses that are working to solve these problems in consort with a local school district or two have organized themselves into a network that meets several times a year to share information on progress and to think through next steps.

So, too, have the state university system and state K–12 system leaders who are working on these issues at the statewide level. Information on both policy options and action strategies is available from the National Association of System Heads and the Education Trust.

Kali Haycock is president of the Education Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that works to promote high academic achievement for students at all levels from kindergarten through college.

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More Than 13 Ways of Looking at Degree Attainment

By Clifford A. delman

The title of this piece, a play on that of Wallace Stevens’ poem, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” reflects the nearly infinite variety of nuances in the basic question about attainment in American higher education.

When newspaper reporters or state legislative aides telephone and ask, “What proportion of community college students earn a bachelor’s degree or higher? What percentage of community college students earn credentials?” the answers are not clear until the questioner defines who is in the denominator (or what we call the “universe”): all students who graduated from high school? all students who ever said they aspired to a bachelor’s degree? all students who entered college? all students who attended a four-year college at any time? all students who entered a four-year college directly from high school?

The first denominator, the numerator is comparatively easy, but still must be specified. For the bachelor’s degree, the numerator must include a time “censor”: within five years of high school graduation? within five years of entering college? within six years? by age 35? ever?

As a result, we can complicate the numerator with conditions other than those of time, but with each additional degree of complexity, we are presented with the basic question.

In July of this year, I was asked the basic question by staff at the Congressional Budget Office. The context for the question was a proposed amendment to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, and it included a long-term time-censor—something beyond five or six years.

The purpose of this presentation is not to discuss the proposed amendment, but rather to share with you what I told my colleagues at the Congressional Budget Office.

The source for the data is the postsecondary transcript file of the High School & Beyond/Sophomore Cohort longitudinal study. This is the second national longitudinal study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. The postsecondary transcripts in those studies enable us to tell very accurate student histories, histories that cross state lines and involve many institutions—for the same student.

At present, this is the only data source in the nation that can answer the basic question about long term degree completion rates in recent years. In these data, we are looking at the history of the scheduled high school graduating class of 1982, from the time of their graduation up to 1993, when most of the cohort was 29 or 30 years old.

The Four-Year College Story

The basic position I take in Table 1 (“Postsecondary Fate to Age 30”) is that one is not in the denominator for the calculation of bachelor’s degree attainment rates unless one has gone to trouble of actually enrolling in a bachelor’s degree-granting institution. With that simple gesture, one says far more than repeating 100 times “I want to get a bachelor’s degree” or “I am working toward a bachelor’s degree.” It is neither accurate nor fair to judge attainment among those who did not make a minimum attempt by age 30.

Table 1 first lays out the destinations of those who actually attended four-year colleges at any time no matter how many credits they earned, then indicates what happened to those on-time high school graduates who went directly to college (“no delayed entry”), then reboots both sets of “fates” for those whose true first institution of attendance was a four-year school. Let us call these the “benchmark BA” numbers.

The histories of approximately 1.3 million students are being described here.

Table 1 then ratchets up the threshold of earned credits in the histories of these students three times: first to ten credits then to 30 credits and 30 credits from four-year colleges, and then to 60 credits and 60 credits from four-year colleges. The point is obvious: The more credits one earns, the more likely one is to complete a degree.

At each threshold level, entering college directly from high school and first entering a four-year college results in a higher degree completion rate, though this phenomenon holds statistically significant only at the lower thresholds. Earning one’s threshold credits from four-year colleges—as opposed to any combination of college types—also has a positive impact on degree completion rates, and these effects are significant at every credit threshold.

This is all common sense: and long-term national degree completion rates are very high, no matter how many schools a student attends (54 percent of students in this sample—and 58 percent of the bachelor’s degree recipients—attended more than one).

If one enters a four-year college directly from high school, and gets by the 60th credit, the odds are about 7 in 8 of completing a bachelor’s degree by age 30. That’s pretty good! In an age of multi-institutional attendance, such system graduation rates make far more sense than “institutional graduation rates.” Institutions may “retain,” but it is students who persist. A nd the last time I looked, federal higher education policy was directed at students, not institutions.

Our system may appear sloppy to some, but our results are better than the popular myths, most of which use the institution, and not the student, as the unit of analysis.

The Four-Year College Story

The community college story presented in Table 2 is both very different and very
The Meaning of the Baccalaureate

By Margaret A. Miller

When I was working for the state coordinating board in Virginia, a board member asked me what it meant to get a baccalaureate degree. The question was simple, direct, clear, and utterly unanswerable. So after stuttering and mumbling for a while, I retreated to my office to find three historic pronouncements on what a college education does.

Thomas Jefferson proclaimed the purpose of an education to be the development of “a knowing head and an honest heart.”

Mitchell Fromstein, president of Manpower, Inc., at a Wingspread conference a number of years ago, said he was looking for graduates with flexibility, the capacity to work with others, technological competence, global awareness, and competence in a second language.
civility.

A. Aubrey Bodine, who wrote in 1908 that American college or university today, the skills and knowledge the great 19th-century thinkers talk about are familiar. The general goals of higher education that these writers describe prefigure many general descriptions of the mental tools with which we should equip students to prepare them for the 21st century. Consider the National Education Goal for collegiate education: Graduates should be able to “communicate, solve problems and think critically” at a high level of skill. These have been the remarkably constant aims of education over time.

A Capacity to Communicate:

A rhetorical skill has been one of the most important marks of an educated person since the time of the Greeks. John Stuart Mill is the most eloquent writer on this subject. In On Liberty, he discussed the ability to engage in “free and equal discussion,” which for him was the necessary condition of any person’s capacity for improvement and self-correction throughout a lifetime. What Mill called the “morality of public discussion” included the calm self-discipline to argue according to the rules of logic, to consider all facts and arguments, even those that tell against your case; to listen carefully to what is said and to represent it accurately in your responses; and to be willing to change in response to what you hear.

Problem Solving:

Henry Adams, the grandson and great-grandson of presidents, said of his Harvard education that, if he had it to do over again, he would study only French, German, Spanish, and mathematics. He was looking for communication and problem-solving tools. Adams discovered, when he began his life as a professional man on the verge of the 20th century, that his collegiate education had not provided him with the skills he needed; he said he was better prepared for the year one by his education than for the year 1900.

Contemporary students learn the problem-solving skills they need when they have a chance to use them to solve a real problem. A dams had to wait until the start of his career before that kind of education began for him.

Critical Thinking:

John Henry Newman described “the formation of mind” as a habit of fitting new knowledge into what we already know, which we then adjust. That implies a set of principles that organize our knowledge as it grows. When we learn, we take information in and fit it into our existing mental structures; when we learn deeply, we adjust those structures as necessary to accommodate the new information.

A capacity for critical thinking is, if you will, the mental muscle we develop in the study of a variety of fields.

But critical thinking is not just a matter of mental skills. Cardinal Newman thought that true “formation of mind” could not occur without broad knowledge, a sense of the cultural and historical landscape and one’s place in it. For an American living at the end of the 20th century, this includes understanding where one fits into a large and very complex cultural and historical American picture, and where that fits, in turn, into a larger and even more complex global picture.

So, in short, a college education should equip students with the ability to communicate and to solve problems, and it should help them develop the discipline and knowledge that will form the basis for a lifetime of learning.

But why are these things necessary? Why not just teach students to do jobs? The men I have quoted all shaped their cultures, as well as being shaped by them, because they had to a remarkable degree the qualities that they attribute to an educated person. All college graduates should be capable of shaping rather than simply being at the effect of, the changes that will permeate their lives.

A recent survey of American A. I. S. for Higher Education, we pushed ourselves to explain why we cared about the improvement of higher education. The answer, we said, was because we cared about students and their development. But why did we care about those things? Because we wanted American colleges and universities to educate students for their responsibilities as individuals, as citizens and as productive contributors to society.

For me the chief value of my education has been delight. I love the perspective that comes from seeing where I fit into a larger picture—astronomical, historical, biological and social. I love the strength that comes with learning new things and using my mental muscle. I love the sense of expansion and connection that comes from seeing and hearing things not accessible to my own eyes and ears, and in having lifelong conversations with people long dead or far away.

But we also are citizens, and our ability to act rationally in that capacity is one of the hopeful premises on which democratic citizenship is based. This ability includes not just the capacity to vote intelligently. It also includes the disposition and skills to balance individual good with the responsibilities that we have to our communities.

The original goal of the colonial college was to provide moral education for society’s leaders. A. S. R. Putnam has most recently observed in his book, A. I. A. Lone, we are all much wiser when we lose a sense of civic responsibility. What we lose especially is the enlarged sense of self that comes from understanding that we are a part of something beyond the self.

And that sense of civic responsibility does more than simply promote the good of the community: The capacities to communicate and solve problems are also our best hope of ensuring harmony among communities. In Three Guineas, written in 1938, Virginia Woolf addressed the question, “If I want to stop war, where should I donate three guineas?” She answered, “To college.”

When asked why they go to college, most students put “getting a good job” high on their list. And indeed, insofar as higher education enables people to use their mental strengths in useful work, it contributes both to their good and to the good of society.

But are the tools I have mentioned—the skills of communication, problem solving, critical thinking—really what’s needed in the workforce today? And if they are, do colleges provide them?

Many colleges, and many majors, today focus on providing their students with an education that prepares them to do a specific job. But consider this: The Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that a person should plan on having between five and seven careers in a lifetime. A lot of people coming out of college need the advanced capacity to do something in particular, but they also need general intellectual skills and dispositions.

In Virginia, we interviewed a group of manufacturers about the characteristics of the people they wanted colleges and universities to send them. They were glad to be able to consider the technical competence of the engineering graduates they hired. They were a little less certain that they could count on general workplace skills, such as the capacity to use the near-ubiquitous new technologies. And they were not at all convinced they could assume that the college graduates they hired would have the communication and problem-solving skills to move from task to task, job to job, and from group to group.

Finally, since engineering knowledge these days has a half-life of less than five years, they wanted graduates who were prepared to continue to learn new things and who possessed the curiosity that compels them to do so. These were the skills and dispositions that they considered to be in shortest supply.

A baccalaureate education should provide these skills, but too rarely does. Most American colleges and universities still run on an agrarian calendar with industrial production methods, and the product is much as one would expect it to be.

But M. I. T. is an exception. This is why higher education needs to change, ironically, back to something closer to the ideal articulated by the people I have been quoting. Even temporary workers (most of us, soon) need to be independent thinkers rather than compliant order-takers in the new global economy. Practically speaking, in the post-industrial age—the information age—human beings are no longer “hhands” but “heads.”

This brings me to my final question: Who cares what the undergraduate degree actually certifies about a graduate? Increasingly, everyone has choices to make, for which that information would be useful. In choosing which college graduates to hire, captains of industry (to borrow the 19th-century term) could use information about what skills and abilities are certified by a given diploma and which diplomas ensure that the bearer has the intellectual nimbleness this age requires. Legislators and state policy makers, who need to choose which higher education initiatives to support, might find helpful an understanding of the kind of learning that is likely to result from each. Students and parents, facing rising costs and a bewildering variety of institutions, might prefer to choose among them on the basis of what their graduates know and can do, instead of on other bases such as reputation, price tag, first impressions and hunches.

A college or university should define clearly, succinctly and publicly its criteria and standards for graduate attainment. It should organize the resources it has, and everything it does, to generate as effectively and efficiently as possible the kind of learning I have described. And it should gather and communicate evidence about the curricular and co-curricular strategies and pedagogies it has implemented to enhance learning, as well as the results of those strategies.

Thomas Jefferson proclaimed the purpose of an education to be the development of “a knowing head and an honest heart.”

Margaret A. Miller is president of the American Association for Higher Education. This article was adapted from her speech at Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis, in October 1997.
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So some of the key players are new, and no one is quite sure how the game will be played.

"There's sort of a vacuum now," said Ross Hodel, the BHE's deputy director for external relations. "The big question is: Can the momentum we've had in recent years be sustained?"

For five consecutive years, BHE budget requests have been approved by Governor Edgar, an unusual occurrence in any state. This year the campuses did even better. BHE proposed, and the governor accepted, a 6.5 percent increase in higher education spending for the 1998-99 academic year. But the legislature, feeling flush because of an anticipated $1 billion state budget surplus, increased that to 7.1 percent.

A major reason for these budget successes, even in somewhat lean years has been a BHE initiative known as "PQP" ("Priorities, Quality, Productivity"), which has resulted in the elimination or consolidaton of more than 600 outdated or duplicative programs in the state's 12 public universities and, to a lesser extent, in the 49 community colleges over the last six years. A average $36 million a year has been saved, money that has been reallocated by the campuses to high priority needs, especially improvements in undergraduate instruction.

The PQP drive was led by Arthur Quern, a Chicago businessman who was chairman of the Board of Higher Education until he was killed in a plane crash two years ago.

"PQP is one of the reasons I've been much more accepting of their budget requests," Governor Edgar said in an interview, "because I knew they had been through that difficult process and had made some tough decisions."

At the Southern Illinois University campus in Carbondale, for instance, six doctoral programs, 12 master's degrees and 16 bachelor's degrees have been eliminated since 1993, despite considerable faculty opposition.

The Carbondale campus also abolished the College of Technical Careers, which offered two-year associate degrees in such subjects as dental hygiene and mortuary science. A few of these became four-year degree programs but most were shifted to...
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nearby community colleges.

“We probably couldn’t have made those cuts without a push from PQP,” said Southern Illinois University President Ted Sanders (no relation to Keith).

John Wanat, vice provost at the University of Illinois’ Chicago campus, agreed. “PQP has been a useful prod,” he said. “It makes it easier for us to deal with the deans, to tell them we have to have some savings, we must make some reallocations, because the state says so.”

PQP also has had strong support in the Illinois legislature.

“I think we have a much more accountable higher education system in Illinois as a result of this process,” said state Senator John Mailland, of Bloomington, an assistant majority leader in the Republican-controlled upper house. “I would be very surprised if someone decided not to continue it.”

But POP has been unpopular with some campus administrators and with most faculty members. It is unclear whether Blakemore, the new BHE chairman, and Keith Sanders, the new executive director, will push it as vigorously as their predecessors. And, if they do, will the new governor pay attention?

“It really depends on them,” John Wanat said. “Will they go after this with the same ‘jihad’ attitude that Art Quern and Dick Wagner had?”

A plainly not.

“I believe POP has been sufficiently internalized—everyone has come to accept it—that we no longer need to place such a high priority on it,” Blakemore said in an interview at his Comiskey Park office.

“We will continue with the annual reports and mission reviews, but I would like to move on to other issues, such as access, affordability, distance education and other uses of technology and a more market-based approach to higher education.”

Sanders said he thought POP was “a very good idea, crafted by people who were educationally and politically smart,” but, he added, “the times have changed so much” that new approaches are needed.

“We have to be as high a priority with the new governor as we have been with the current governor,” Sanders said, and he does not think that merely continuing the POP process will be enough.

Sanders has proposed, and the board has approved, a “Citizens’ Agenda for Illinois Higher Education,” which includes such goals as increasing access to higher education, making sure that college remains affordable, improving educational quality and making better use of technology.

Few people would argue with these commonplace objectives but so far there are few specifics. Sanders and Blakemore hope to come up with these through public opinion polls and focus groups and by traveling the state to meet with educators, major employers and union leaders, among others.

“What we’re doing is pretty obvious,” Sanders said. “We’re trying to create a new agenda for higher education...an agenda the new governor can run on in four years. We are searching for the ideas which are perfect for the early part of this new century, as POP was for its time.”

But some observers wonder if, in the search for new ideas, many of the POP gains will be lost.

“The challenge will be to sustain the good parts of POP—accountability and greater productivity—but repack them to get to the new governor’s attention,” said Edward R. Hines, a long-time observer of the interaction between Illinois politics and higher education.

Getting the new governor’s attention might not be easy.

A through Illinois will spend more than $22 billion—11.4 percent of general fund revenues—on higher education in the 1999 fiscal year, there are few signs that either gubernatorial candidate—Republican George Ryan, the current front-runner, or Democrat Glenn Poshard—has paid much attention to higher education policy.

“Neither one has shown a very strong interest in higher education,” said Don Fouts, president of the Federation of Illinois Independent Colleges and Universities, an opinion shared by many in recent interviews.

In a 24-page education position paper, Ryan devotes only a page and a half to postsecondary education, saying he favors more “distance education,” better high-tech job training and expanded opportunities for older students who work and attend college part-time.

There is no Poshard position paper on higher education and repeated efforts to elicit his views on the topic were unavailing. Phone calls were exchanged. Messages were taken. Documents were promised. Nothing happened.

Some think either candidate would treat higher education well, unless there is a fiscal crisis.

“On this issue, I don’t think the higher education community can lose,” said Chicago attorney Philip J. Rock, a member of the Board of Higher Education and former majority leader of the state Senate. “I don’t think there’s a nickel’s worth of difference between them.”

But others are not so sure.

“If Ryan wins, then I think it’s business as usual, but if Poshard gets in, I would look for some big changes,” said another BHE member, who asked not to be identified.

“What is critical is to continue the bipartisan approach to higher education that we have enjoyed during the Edgar administration,” said BHE Chairman Blakemore, an African American and a Republican, who was appointed to the board by Governor Edgar.

Blakemore and Sanders aim to make the Board of Higher Education less of a regulatory body.

“I hope we can let the marketplace decide some of these issues and not depend so much on regulations,” Blakemore said.

Sanders would like to “turn our focus from efficiency and productivity to the concerns that are reflected in our Citizens Agenda.” He also hopes to “streamline our procedures without weakening them.” These rather general statements have been interpreted differently on the various campuses.

At the University of Illinois main campus in Urbana-Champaign, the state’s flagship research university, there is concern that the “marketplace” might not be in the best interest of either the state or the nation.

Said a top university administrator, “To be competitive, the state must excel in information technology and in biotechnology, two areas where the University of Illinois has to take the lead. To wait for the marketplace to decide these are important research areas might leave us badly behind.”

But the deregulation and “free market” talk are music to the ears of John LaTour,

continued next page
Although Illinois will spend more than $2.2 billion on higher education in the 1999 fiscal year, there are few signs that either gubernatorial candidate has paid much attention to higher education policy.

Springfield, know best what should be done," LaTourette said. "That's the kind of talk I like to hear. Because of the acceleration of change, the competition is very keen and we can't be tied down to these lengthy procedures."

LaTourette said current BHE policies make it easier for out-of-state, for-profit institutions to start new degree programs in Illinois than it is for the state's own colleges and universities.

John Wanat, of the University of Illinois Chicago campus, echoed the complaint. "Because of the board's regulations and procedures we can't compete with people coming in from out of state," Wanat said. "We can't offer programs in a timely manner."

"Those are valid complaints," said Robert J. English, who owns a financial management firm in Aurora, Illinois, and has been a member of the Board of Higher Education for nine years. "We need to streamline those procedures and we're starting to do it."

Kathleen Kelly, BHE deputy executive director for academic programs, said, "We are going to change the approval system, to reduce the reporting requirements and hopefully shorten the time involved." In September, as a first step, the board delegated some of its authority over academic programs in the state's 49 two-year colleges to the Illinois Community College Board.

The BHE budget approval process also will be changed.

In the past, budget requests for individual campuses were hammered out in tough negotiations between Executive Director Dick Wagner and a few aides and local campus administrators in a series of what became known as "Big Picture" meetings. Several legislators and legislative staff members said these hard-nosed sessions were a key reason for the BHE's success in proposing annual higher education budgets that were acceptable to the governor and the legislature.

"Wagner tracked state revenues carefully and he always came up with a number that would fit the overall financial situation of the state," said Tim Nuding, Republican staff consultant for the Senate Appropriations Committee. "It was always a realistic number, in contrast to the unreasonable budget requests we would get from the K-12 people."

But Blakemore and Sanders want a "more open" and less confrontational process.

They have arranged for BHE members to participate in the "Big Picture" meetings and they want each campus to have several opportunities to argue for its requests before the board makes final decisions.

A parent complaint by some campus presidents has persuaded the new BHE leadership that the agency has drifted too far away from the campuses in recent years and has become more of a hindrance than a help.

"The process will be more open," Sanders said. "More people will be involved and all will see it before any recommendation goes to the governor's office."

Blakemore likes the idea of involving Board of Higher Education members in budget negotiations. "If you've got to get into the details," he said, "in order to know if a campus budget request matches its mission and if it fits with statewide goals."

But others believe the participation of BHE members in budget talks is a terrible idea.

"This is not a proper role for the board," said the president of a major campus, requesting anonymity. "Boards are policy makers, not managers."

Several board members said they did not want to participate in the "Big Picture" meetings but did not want to be quoted to that effect.

The new emphasis on harmony and consensus in BHE budget decision-making strikes some Springfield observers as a mistake. They believe the board could lose some of the credibility it has built up over the years and could be seen by the new governor and the legislature as mere boosters for expansion-minded campus presidents.

The Board of Higher Education already is so regarded by state Senator Steve Rauschenberger, chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. "The BHE is little more than a cheerleader," Rauschenberger said. "The board sees its mission as very narrowly defined. It will never be an agent for fundamental change."

Aware of these concerns, Sanders has contracted with Dick Wagner to work on next year's budget.

Veteran BHE member Robert English said changes in board policies and procedures are not likely to be drastic.

"I think we will become a little less regulatory and there will be more board participation in the process," he said. "The pendulum will swing, but it will swing in a very small arc."