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"No matter what it is called, who does it, or where in the institution it is being done, universities are engaged in marketing." When this claim was first made in 1972, in an article that ran in the prestigious *Journal of Higher Education*,¹ most academics dismissed it as heresy. Those who ran and taught in universities saw themselves as members of a community of scholars committed to the generation and transmission of free thought, not as pitchmen.

That Mr. Chips's view of college life gave reality a romantic gloss. Dollars have always greased the wheels of higher education; were it otherwise, the term "legacy" would not have a meaning specific to universities. And the then-new "multiversity"—what University of California president Clark Kerr described as an academic city, not a village—was designed to be in sync with the needs of the market. Nonetheless, the romantics had it basically right. Three decades ago, the business side of running a university was viewed as a necessary evil, properly consigned to the institutional periphery, while at the heart of the institution the professoriate reigned supreme. To these sovereigns, the concept of marketing—more generally, the notion that higher education bowed to the marketplace—was foreign. It was also antithetical to the bedrock principles of higher education.

What is new, and troubling, is the raw power that money exerts in higher education. Even as public attention has been riveted on matters of principle like affirmative action and diversions like the theater-of-the-absurd canon wars, many American colleges and universities have been busily reinventing themselves as a reaction to intensified market forces. The pursuit of money, formerly a necessity, has become a virtue. "The business of the University of California," its ex-president proclaimed, "is business."²

These days priorities are determined less by academic leaders than by multiple "constituencies" and managerial mandarins. The new vocabulary of customers and stakeholders, niche marketing and branding, and winner-take-all embodies this sea change in the higher education "industry." In this brave new world each academic unit is a "revenue center," each party a "stakeholder," each student a customer, each professor an entrepreneur, and each institution a seeker after profit, whether in money capital or intellectual capital.

Nowhere in the university is this market mentality more on display than in the luring, caring, and feeding—and almost incidentally the educating—of undergraduates. The 1972 *Journal of Higher Education* article insisted that what colleges called recruiting was really a euphemism for advertising, financial aid was pricing, and the bloodletting ritual of revamping the curriculum was nothing more than product development. This was shock treatment, rhetoric meant to attract attention, but nowadays the emphasis on marketing to recruit top students is unapologetic. Universities on the make hire consulting firms to give themselves an academic face-lift, what the trade calls a new "brand." Schools at the top of the ladder battle, sometimes unscrupulously, to maintain their elite position. As reported widely in the media in the spring of 2002, staff members at Princeton's admissions office went so far as to hack into Yale's admissions website.

"The objective of the enrollment process," says William Elliott, Carnegie Mellon's vice president for enrollment management (good-bye admissions director, hello corporate-speak), "is to improve your market position." And as Alvin Sanoff, who used to edit *U.S. News & World Report's* annual college guide, points out, "The pressures on admissions folks and on schools to get the best candidates is enormous."³

Sanoff should know, since the statistically dubious *U.S. News* ranking system, launched in the mid-1980s, has become the bible in higher education. Although there had been college guides before, now—crucially—there was a definite pecking order. To those who devised the rankings, prestige was essentially equated with selectivity: What percent of applicants does a college reject? What percent of those that it admits choose to attend? There are, of course, much better measures

of the *quality* of a college education: What do students learn? Do they acquire the intellectual skills of analytical reasoning and critical thinking? What is the "value-added" of the education a college delivers? But only a few schools, among them Reed College in Oregon and Alma College in Michigan, contended that they, rather than an otherwise little-read newsmagazine, should determine their priorities. Those schools refused to supply *U.S. News* with the data the magazine demanded, but their principled stand proved costly, as they found themselves crucified in the rankings.

Almost every institution in the land embraced the *U.S. News* criteria as its own. The competition for students turned into a donnybrook as universities rushed to claw their way up the ladder. To attract students with the best academic credentials, colleges increasingly award scholarships on the basis of test scores rather than need. Financial aid offers are deployed strategically, to lure more desirable (or reluctant) applicants, rather than to help talented students from poor families attend college. There is greater reliance on admitting students through early decision, not because this makes sense in educational terms but because applicants who are accepted early usually enroll—this makes the college appear more selective, and hence more prestigious.

Historian Roger Geiger has calculated which schools have been the big winners in the star student sweepstakes. Colleges that recorded the largest percentage increases between 1995 and 2000 in enrolling students with 700-plus SAT scores— among them Pennsylvania, Duke, New York University, Boston University, University of Southern California, Washington University (St. Louis), Rochester— excel at what economists (and college presidents) Michael McPherson and Morton Schapiro call the "student aid game." Some universities have ventured into the realm of the unethical, manipulating the system by inflating students' SAT scores and the proportion of alumni donors (a factor in the rankings)— even stooping so low as to recruit applicants who have no chance of being admitted, just to make the school look more selective.⁴

Today, sought-after applicants are treated like pampered consumers whose preferences must be *satisfied*, not as acolytes whose preferences are *being formed* in the process of being educated. In this rivalry, much more is at stake than bragging rights for trustees and alumni. Prestige brings tangible benefits, and in this winner-take-all world small differences in reputation have large consequences. Although slippage in the rankings has an immediate impact on the following year's class, the more highly regarded the institution, the more top students and prized professors it attracts and the more readily it can secure the biggest gifts. (It is a truism among fundraisers that money follows money, not need.) Such successes reinforce a school's place in the hierarchy. "To those who have," as the Book of Matthew intones, "more shall be given"—in other words, "the more, the more."

College applicants have responded with alacrity to these signals of status, treating the *U.S. News* rankings as gospel. What matters most in picking a college, a survey of students at elite schools finds, is not the caliber of the education it delivers but rather its prestige.

Sixties-style idealism has long since given way to pragmatism. These aspirants regard an elite pedigree as their ticket to the new aristocracy. During the past thirty years, the percentage of freshmen that expect their college years will bring them better jobs has quadrupled, from 20 to 80 percent. Meanwhile, those who anticipate that college will help them develop a philosophy of living plummeted by precisely the same extent—from 80 to 20 percent. In 2002 the objective most often identified by male freshmen was "being *very* well-off financially." These Jay Gatsby's in training do whatever they can—and their families spend whatever it takes—to distinguish themselves from the crowd. They see it as a blue-chip investment.⁵

This frenzied activity is entirely consistent with what the model of rational economic behavior predicts. More information is becoming available in the form of rankings; colleges and applicants, the buyers and sellers, are doing the best job they can to promote themselves; and money talks. But neither the colleges nor the students have much incentive to emphasize the life of the mind.

Consider the plight of Beaver College in the late 1990s. Beaver had historically been a women's liberal arts college a cut below the elite "girls' schools" known as the Seven Sisters, but

as that niche vanished in the 1970s, it suffered what one longtime faculty member describes as an "ongoing identity crisis." With enrollment dropping and an endowment of just \$400,000, it was obliged to use deposits sent in by the following year's incoming class to pay off its creditors.

Beaver College did exactly what many schools do these days: It turned for rescue to a consulting firm. Embracing the consultants' recommendations, the college revamped the administrative structure; recruited a vice president for enrollment management; started awarding scholarships on academic merit, rather than need, to tempt applicants with better SATs; and adopted "total quality management," an idea lifted from the management textbooks. (This means, among other things, making the campus visit a more "memorably pleasant" experience.)

Still, there remained the ticklish problem of the school's name. Pop culture had long since turned an innocent animal into a double entendre, and the vice president for enrollment management argued that the name scared off prospective applicants. Back came the consultants to help the school find a new name—one that, as Beaver president Bette Landman said, would "reflect the brand." This meant something short and punchy, its first letter coming at the beginning of the alphabet to ensure early mention in college guidebooks; something pleasing sounding, easy to say and read—something, as Landman put it, that could "become a strong trademark."⁶

Arcadia University was the preferred choice in the focus groups on which the school relied for inspiration. It evoked pastoral images— "artistic, in a pretty setting," a focus group participant said—and "sounds like a fun place to be." Similarly, the college morphed into a university because the focus groups believed "university" sounded more serious.

Companies give themselves new names all the time, so why not a college? Yet whatever the institution's name, what should matter is the substance behind the symbol. However, instead of seeing the occasion of a name change as an opportunity to rethink the academic mission, Arcadia opted to distinguish itself by promoting a heavily subsidized spring break trip to London for its freshmen. This "London Preview" is just the sort of gimmick that a consultant would concoct: "Arcadia = Fun."

The name change and niche marketing have worked: The number of applicants has grown substantially, and in the fall of 2002, Arcadia enrolled the biggest freshman class in its history. Whether they are receiving a better education, though, is anyone's guess.

Once tuition revenues started flowing in, Arcadia's first priority was to build a new campus center. In this the school is hardly unique—it is hard to find a university that is not investing heavily to spruce itself up. "It's not a hardship to go to college," says Kevin Kruger at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.⁷ That's a considerable understatement.

At Michigan State, lucky students can watch big-screen TV while lounging in the therapeutic bubble jets in their dorm rooms. "There's a putting green and batting cages at the new indoor tennis and track center at DePauw University," Mary Leonard writes in a front-page *Boston Globe* article surveying the playing field.

At Saint Xavier University in Chicago, students can work out with a personal trainer in the fitness center and then pick up a Krispy Kreme doughnut and a Starbucks double latte, all under one roof. . . . The first college ESPN Zone at the Rochester Institute of Technology [offers] sports on plasma televisions and a broadcast desk to let students practice doing play-by-play on camera. . . . The feeding of this flock has become big business. The University of Cincinnati has hired a master chef to create gourmet menus. . . . Georgia Tech in Atlanta has a greengrocer in a residence hall. . . . The campus center at Babson College has vegan and sushi stations and a full-time person preparing specialty coffees.⁸

As Kevin Kruger acknowledges, "This is definitely driven by a competitive marketplace."⁹ Amid the 2003 recession, Moody's, the bond-rating service, noted that universities floated \$13 billion in bonds, betting their fiscal futures on frills.

This spending spree responds to demands being made by the current generation of undergraduates. These students, who were born in the mid-1980s, were brought up (at least until

9/11) in an era of unparalleled peace and prosperity. What undergraduates from an earlier era would regard as pampering, these adolescents take for granted. They see themselves as savvy consumers, and in picking a college they are looking for the sybaritic pleasures of gated-community suburbia. For them, monasticism is out and hedonism is in.

What students and their parents *do not* pay much attention to is especially telling. Applicants fixated on prestige and seeking to be cosseted are unlikely to ask about the number of books and journals in the campus library. (Who needs books, many of them believe, when everything's on the Internet?) Nor do they inquire about how many of their teachers are actually full-time members of the community rather than adjunct instructors, the so-called freeway flyers and subway strap-holders who do not have secure jobs from one year to the next.

This generation also has a clear—if in many instances wrong-headed—idea about academic life, and most universities have acceded to the students' wishes. Undergraduates regard good grades as a birthright. Grade inflation is the result: at elite institutions, the "gentleman's C" has morphed into a B. As consumers, students typically want a Chinese menu of courses from which to choose. In the past quarter-century, there has been a mass migration away from the traditional academic core and toward what is seen as useful; the biggest enrollment increases are recorded in such fields as business administration, recreation management, and public safety. Liberal arts professors, much like Swiss watchmakers, offer something that is widely regarded as a luxury item to a shrinking clientele. In order to best the competition, even the most prestigious universities have been attentive to these demands for the practical: During the 1990s, when Harvard began losing top applicants to Stanford because of its Silicon Valley connections, it devised its own high-tech program and allowed entrepreneurial undergraduates to operate businesses out of their dorm rooms.

To be sure, competition has motivated some schools to do a better job in the classroom. A handful of universities, including Syracuse and Arizona, recast themselves as "student-centered research universities." Princeton increased the size of its undergraduate enrollment and eliminated all loan requirements in its financial aid package. Those changes, which sent tremors through the Ivy League, have meant that more students, and more applicants from needy families, can enroll there. Across the land, many universities have added freshman seminars to the curricular bill of fare, and almost every school has gone about reviewing its general education requirements. Although there are exceptions, these ventures are mostly marketing devices designed to make a college look good. The professor sitting under a tree, surrounded by a gaggle of adoring students, is more a viewbook staple than the sign of genuine educational reform.

Academic consumerism is not just an accommodation to students' desires—it has been elevated to the status of an educational philosophy. In this Brown University led the way. Until the 1970s Brown had suffered through a long, inglorious history as the doormat of the Ivy League. Situated in the crime-ridden backwater of Providence, Rhode Island, it was the safety school for students rejected by Yale or Princeton, an unhappy place because it was the third or fourth choice for most of its students.

This situation turned around completely in the span of a decade. From being the least selective of the Ivies, Brown became one of the most picky. "Harvard University," a T-shirt reads. "Didn't get into Brown."

The main reason is the introduction and smart marketing of something called the New Curriculum. It is more accurately described as the No Curriculum, and reads like an undergraduate's wish list. All distribution requirements are abolished, the number of courses needed to graduate is cut, majors are eschewed in favor of individually tailored concentrations, and students can opt to take all their courses on a pass-fail basis. "Brown's curriculum is structured in such a way," the college viewbook declares, "as to teach students the lessons of *choice* and *responsibility*." One could also say that the Brown curriculum puts the inmates in charge of the asylum.

This "choice and responsibility" model has been widely emulated. Brown's experience showed

that laissez-faire appealed to many students: If it works in Providence, the thinking ran, it can work at our school as well. The idea of "choice and responsibility" also appealed to many professors, especially in the humanities and qualitative social sciences. The No Curriculum is ideologically compatible with these faculty members' rejection of the Enlightenment, or modernist, commitment to the search for truth through the exposure of error, in favor of the relativism of postmodernity. The new guard trashed the fundamental belief that their calling was to transmit knowledge to the next generation. On the contrary, they insisted, all knowledge was relative and no approach to the universe of wisdom was better than any other; for that reason, requiring students to learn any given body of knowledge was arbitrary. More pointedly, it reflected the imposition of Dead White Male orthodoxy, or embodied neocolonialism, or enshrined heterosexism, or racism, or ... —the litany of postmodern pejoratives is seemingly endless. Since no one could say with confidence what the young needed to know, these professors argued, why not turn the keys of the asylum over to adolescents?

The free-form curriculum is defended on pedagogical grounds, as accommodating students' desires to dive straight into what most interests them. Conveniently, it also frees professors to concentrate on what most interests *them*, rather than obliging the faculty to teach students how to think critically for themselves. In this respect, it represents a response to another market force—the insistence by the most-sought-after professors that their teaching focus on their specialized research interests, rather than on encouraging critical thinking among the young.

This is a relatively new development. Until World War II, the academy was a parochial world, one where professors fastened their loyalties to their institutions. But during the postwar era, in what has been labeled an "academic revolution," these loyalties began to shift, away from the campus and to the discipline. Mr. Chips became a vanishing breed, as esteem among one's fellow biologists or economists grew to matter more than esteem at Siwash U.

Now there are signs of another seismic shift in loyalty among the academic elite—toward the individuals themselves. Mirroring the aspirations of their own on-the-make institutions, these superstars see themselves as academic entrepreneurs. Although no one outside the world of higher education used to notice professorial changes, star faculty members have turned into media darlings whose comings and goings are sometimes front-page news. When a university lands one of these public intellectuals or a professor who is widely esteemed by fellow scholars or someone who attracts large research grants, the result is buzz and prestige—valuable intellectual capital for the institution. In this era of free-agent professors (some of whom retain agents to represent them in their negotiations with the university), faculty mobility in the senior ranks is greater, and salary differentials between the most hotly pursued professors and everyone else are larger than ever before.

When it comes to what and how much they teach, these professors typically get what they want. Although superb teaching can bring popularity on the campus, no one becomes a superstar because of classroom prowess; no one makes a reputation, either in a discipline or as a media sage, by introducing twenty-year-olds to Wittgenstein or Einstein. It is not surprising, then, that many luminaries are not interested in offering introductory courses. If they are willing to teach undergraduates—and some are not—it is usually in their narrowly circumscribed area of expertise.

The recent history of New York University's philosophy department illustrates this tension between star faculty members' interests and the quality of undergraduates' education. Since the mid-1990s, the department's reputation has risen with a speed unprecedented in the annals of higher education: A department without an accredited PhD program in 1995 was ranked number one in the world just five years later. This transformation has not come about because NYU's professors are teaching Descartes and Kant with renewed vigor. Quite the opposite: Such "history" courses are regarded as outside the "science" of philosophy, the province of graduate students and adjunct instructors rather than the "real" academics. One old-line philosophy professor with a reputation as a superb teacher was hounded out of the department. "He's certainly very popular and charismatic," an ex-colleague says damningly, but what he teaches "doesn't seem like philosophy to me."¹⁰

The cadre of internationally known scholars who migrated to NYU perceives its responsibility

as carrying forward a tradition of analytic philosophy—currently the most prestigious area of philosophical endeavor—whose style deters all but the most persistent of outsiders. The newcomers' teaching loads are light, consisting mainly of specialized seminars for advanced undergraduates and PhD students. Undergraduates are likely to take most of their philosophy courses from part-time instructors.

It may be true that adjuncts and graduate students make the best teachers. These part-timers must see teaching as their calling, since otherwise they would not put up with the terrible working conditions and measly salaries. But it is surely true that, because of the circumstances under which they labor, these instructors cannot provide the students with the intellectual continuity that is essential to a first-rate education. Because they have no job security, they are constantly on the lookout for their next classroom gig. There is no reason to expect those who are not on the path leading to tenure to be loyal members of an academic community that shows no loyalty to them.

These are wretched circumstances under which to mount an undergraduate education of quality. A well-crafted curriculum demands a major commitment of time and energy. Courses must be designed with painstaking care, and course sequences that trace a coherent pathway of knowledge must be set. The expectation that students do a great deal of reading, writing, and experimenting—work that is crucial to their intellectual development—demands a comparable investment by the faculty. For entirely different reasons, neither the academic entrepreneurs nor the strap-hanger adjuncts make the necessary investment.

There are, of course, some schools where teaching still matters. Professors at liberal arts colleges, even elite colleges like Swarthmore and Amherst, are expected to take their classroom obligations seriously. But the liberal arts colleges are swimming against the market tides. Every year the number of these schools shrinks, as does their enrollment. They have had a hard time competing with state universities that, aided by state subsidies, have created "honors colleges." Striving regional universities like the University of Richmond, which used to emphasize the quality of teaching, are now fixated on the quantity of their faculty members' publications. Emulating the prestigious universities whose ranks Richmond would like to join, the university has cut faculty members' teaching loads, while expecting them to have written two books before coming up for tenure. (One can only pity the trees pulped for these epistles.) Meanwhile professors in the leading graduate programs are actively propagating themselves. They discourage their best students from considering careers in liberal arts colleges, instead preparing them for positions in research universities—that, after all, is where academic reputations are made.

A few leading universities, most famously Columbia and the University of Chicago, are also known for their dedication to undergraduates. (Not coincidentally, these were the only two schools, among the top twenty nationally ranked universities, where students did not specify that prestige was the main reason for enrolling.) Sadly, those reputations are largely smoke and mirrors.

Columbia has long contended that its liberal arts college is the jewel in the university's crown. Resisting the conventional wisdom, it maintains its widely admired required core curriculum. Yet when graduate students and part-time faculty went on strike in a dispute over wages in the spring of 2004, the college was forced to shut down. The university's dedication to undergraduate education was exposed as a sham: Just as at many leading universities, many of Columbia College's core classes are taught by graduate students and adjunct faculty, not full-time professors. In educating undergraduates, Columbia turns out to be little different from NYU; the main difference is Columbia's pretension to be something special.

Like Columbia, the University of Chicago fetishizes the education of its undergraduates. Chicago is more self-absorbed—more precisely, self-obsessed—than any other institution of higher learning in America. A passing remark made long ago by the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead is still widely recited: "I think the one place where I have been that is most like ancient Athens is the University of Chicago," and the university claims as its own any Nobel Prize winner who has ever taught there.

Curricular reforms are blood wars in Hyde Park. In 1998, when the university's administration

proposed cutting back the required core curriculum, opposition was vociferous and venomous. Seventy-four senior professors sent an open letter to the trustees, warning darkly that "the intellectual tradition and academic organization of our university are being put at risk by its present leadership." Ten academic ancients—icons such as Saul Bellow, David Riesman, and Mortimer Adler, the intellectual midwife to the core curriculum sixty years earlier—weighed in against this "dangerous" venture. "Making academic decisions on the basis of marketing," they intoned, "is itself a crime against the mind."¹¹

"The administration did not understand that if they cut the core curriculum, the natives would get restless," anthropologist Marshall Sahlins thundered in a widely circulated broadside. For faculty, students, and alumni alike, "the University itself, as mediated by their own identity with it, has been put at stake."¹²

The rigors of the college experience are indeed pivotal to Chicago's identity. The quarter system is designed to cram a semester's worth of work into ten weeks. Most courses in the humanities and social sciences are conducted as discussions, with no more than thirty students in a class. In this spartan academic environment, where pallor is beautiful and reading Nietzsche at three in the morning is a badge of honor, it is not easy for a lazy student to hide. This is the school where, as students say, "fun comes to die."

The centerpiece of the undergraduate education is the common core curriculum. Its premise is the exact opposite of Brown's "freedom and responsibility" approach. At Chicago all students are supposed to master certain habits of mind, so that they can become independent critics of each of the major intellectual domains. This approach, argues Chicago sociologist Andrew Abbott, "forces"—forces!—"students to achieve a breadth of knowledge and experience they would not necessarily elect for themselves."¹³

On the surface, the drama that played out in Hyde Park, and on the front page of the *New York Times* as well, appears to emblemize the struggle between the values of the marketplace and those of the academy. In fact, the situation is far more complicated.

Chicago's traditionalists assumed that more was better. Yet what was being taught in those courses, and by whom, received no public attention, even though there was widespread faculty unhappiness with their content. Moreover, the biggest threat to the common core did not come from the administration—its proposal entailed sensible pruning, not decimation—but from the faculty, whose members had largely given up on the project.

Only senior professors should teach the core courses, Andrew Abbott argued, because only a widely published academic can stand as a "central authority figure who can model for students the discipline of rethinking ideas."¹⁴ What a marvelous notion—Kant and Mill interpreted by Mortimer Adler or Allan Bloom—but you would have to go elsewhere to find it. At Chicago, the ideal of a college where intellectually obsessive undergraduates are instructed in small classes collides with a shabbier reality. Science courses are delivered lecture style, and few sections are led by faculty members. Even in the humanities and social sciences, nearly two-thirds of classes are taught by graduate students and adjunct instructors. Marshall Sahlins's enthusiasm for a substantial diet of required courses was rooted in his fear that if undergraduates had more opportunities to take electives, people like him—a self-described member of the *graduate* department of anthropology—would have to teach them.

"What we are doing has intellectual integrity!" was the rallying cry of the traditionalists. "But you can only go so far," observes one professor, "before you have to point at the faculty and ask, 'Why aren't you teaching?' " For all its rhetorical pretensions, the University of Chicago turns out not to be very different from NYU.

For parents, politicians, and the public, the mounting cost of a college education is the major higher education topic these days. That is entirely understandable. Tuition hikes of 10 percent and more each year are a big reason why many prospective candidates from middle as well as working class families cannot afford college. Smart poor kids, as one knowledgeable insider summarizes the data, are no more likely to get a college education than dumb rich kids.

Yet too little attention is being paid to another critical issue: How are undergraduates actually being educated? What are they learning in college? The answers are beginning to emerge through careful studies of the "value-added" of a college experience, and those answers are dispiriting. The batch-processing universities, the big state schools that enroll four out of five undergraduates, are generally failing in their teaching obligations. The elite schools seem to do a better job of certifying top students than educating them.

This situation ought to provoke public outrage, but it does not. Instead the public, which when polled gives higher education top marks, accepts the soothing assurance that American universities are the best in the world. Nor is there widespread discontent among undergraduates; overwhelmingly, they praise the college that they attend. That should not be a surprise. Market-driven colleges are going out of their way to assure that students have a good time. Undergraduates can take any course that catches their fancy, whatever its academic worth; moreover, they have no benchmark against which to assess their experience. Surveys of college professors—at least those who are lucky enough to have found a place on the academic career ladder, rather than having to eke out a living as guest workers—show that they too are generally happy with their lot.

In short, the higher education market seems to work for most of the participants. But that market has unhappy consequences—what economists call "negative externalities"—for the nation. Because of the generally shabby quality of undergraduate education, the United States is not getting the educated citizenry that is required if the country is going to stay competitive in the international competition for talented knowledge workers. Those who inveigh against the outsourcing of high-tech jobs should take a closer look at the skills possessed by the current crop of college graduates.

This is how the world seems naturally to work when, as now, the *Zeitgeist* is the market. If healthcare, museums, even churches have been reshaped by intense competitive pressures, why should higher education be any different? In all those instances, the best answer is the same. Even as higher education was awakening to the reality that it engaged in marketing, economist Arthur Okun was pointing out the importance of balancing the values of the market against the values of the commons. "There is a place for the market," Okun wrote, "but the market must be kept in its place."¹⁵

In years past, academic statesmen such as Clark Kerr at Berkeley, Derek Bok at Harvard, and Theodore Hesburgh at Notre Dame could influence public opinion. Yale president Kingman Brewster was such an eloquent critic of the Vietnam War that *New York Times* columnist James Reston urged the Democratic Party to draft him as their 1968 presidential candidate. That is unimaginable now—because university presidents are constantly seeking money from power, they can hardly speak truth to power.

The critical question is this: Is there anyone with sufficient stature to persuade the public that, at their best, institutions of higher learning offer something of such great value that the enterprise is worth subsidizing, even in the face of market pressures? Is there anyone who can convincingly make the case that, as NYU president John Sexton (who is working hard to reinvigorate the academic commons at his own university) has said, there need to be spheres where "money is not the coin of the realm"?

Lacking such a principled defense of nonmarket values, higher education may degenerate into something far less palatable than a house of learning that—as a prophetic report on undergraduate education put it nearly two centuries ago—is "attuned to the business character of the nation."¹⁶ It may degenerate into just another business, the metaphor of the higher education "industry" brought fully to life. Should that scenario come to pass, America's undergraduates will be among the biggest losers. But if there is to be a less dystopian future, one that revives the soul of this old institution, who is to advance it— and if not now, then when?

Notes

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6. *The American Freshman*, the annual report by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), 2003.

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8. Mary Leonard, "On Campus, Comforts Are Major Colleges' Hope Perks Can Boost Enrollment," *Boston Globe*, September 3, 2002, p. A1.

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10. Interview with Professor Peter Unger, conducted at NYU. See Kirp, *Shakespeare*, p. 74.

11. Letter from the Faculty to the Trustees of the University of Chicago, March 21, 1999. See Kirp, *Shakespeare*, p. 36.

12. Scholars for the University of Chicago, April 14, 1999. See Kirp, *Shakespeare*, p. 36.

13. Marshall Sahlins, "The Life of the Mind and the Love of the Body; Or, the New 'Chicago Plan,' Now With Added Balance," March 1999. See Kirp, *Shakespeare*, p. 37.

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