PROLOGUE | AUTONOMY IS BY NO MEANS ABSOLUTE

> "It is always possible, of course, that this pre-eminence of intellectual enterprise in the civilization of the Western peoples is a transient episode; that it may eventually—perhaps even precipitately, with the next impending turn in the fortunes of this civilization—again be relegated to a secondary place in the scheme of things and become only an instrumentality in the service of some dominant aim or impulse, such as a vainglorious patriotism, or dynastic politics, or the breeding of a commercial aristocracy…the aspirations of the American community appear to be divided—between patriotism in the service of the captains of war, and commerce in the service of the captains of finance." | Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America*, 90

After finishing my doctoral degree in United States History in 2009, the job prospects for new historians were close to nil. The American Historical Association had warned for many years about the overproduction of Ph.D. graduates by universities. The recession amplified these conditions. At one point, I estimated that seven in eight colleges and universities to which I had sent application materials subsequently canceled their searches for U.S. historians. In effect, the most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression rendered the market for historians awash with unattached doctoral recipients, including those from Ivy League and other elite colleges across the nation. University of Washington, the Research I university where I studied, offered one of the best departments in the country for the study of history. Nonetheless, I chose to return to the administrative field of institutional research—my occupation prior to pursuing a doctoral program in the early 2000s—rather than struggle along the tenuous path to tenure afforded to adjunct professors.

I found employment readily enough at a Midwest community college in early 2010. Community colleges are widely regarded as "recession proof" because many people who face limited job opportunities or whose families are experiencing economic distress look to their local institution as a chance to renew or pursue their aspirations to earn a college degree. This in turn means that many students in community colleges may only be loosely attached due to regional, state, or national economic conditions rather than their own personal motivations to complete college. Community colleges are typically open admission, that is, they accept every applicant with the requisite high school credential. I soon learned that student support services in the community college setting revolved around the staff's and faculty's efforts to identify which students are "serious" about college and which students enrolled in order to take advantage of state or federal financial aid programs during a recession.

Two years later, I joined a private, nonprofit college in the Middle States accreditation region. While not open admissions, the college routinely accepted 75% to 90% of its applicants in order to meet enrollment targets each year. This particular institution straddled the border between the Middle Atlantic and Northeastern states where the projected population of high school graduates was expected to drop by 5% or more in every state during the 2010s.[1] Despite its relative lack of selectivity and the projected demographic trends, student academic support and administrative strategy centered around the recruitment of "prepared" students. Like many private institutions, the admissions office engaged an external vendor to supply a predictive model to package financial aid for students who met "targeted" application criteria. Once committed to attend, the faculty scoured the admission applications to apply their own criteria for "preparedness" in order to place students in the appropriate freshman class.

Both institutions had several strategic initiatives and committees dedicated to improving students' first-year experiences and, ultimately, freshman retention rates. As the primary lead for institutional effectiveness and research, I worked closely with a number of the faculty and administrators who led various committees and also led two committees with indirect implications for student success. While the overwhelming majority of my colleagues cared deeply about freshmen's outcomes, I soon discovered that most discussions about student success devolved into how best to read the tea leaves on students' psychological states or intellectual faculties. My understaffed office produced numerous tables on retention and graduation rates segmented by every imaginable demographic and application detail from the student database. Our analytical work culminated in a project to create a predictive model for student success that gauged the college "preparedness," "engagement," and "resilience" of students over their college career.

Despite the prodigious accumulation of data, better decision making and quality improvements failed to materialize sustainably at the colleges.

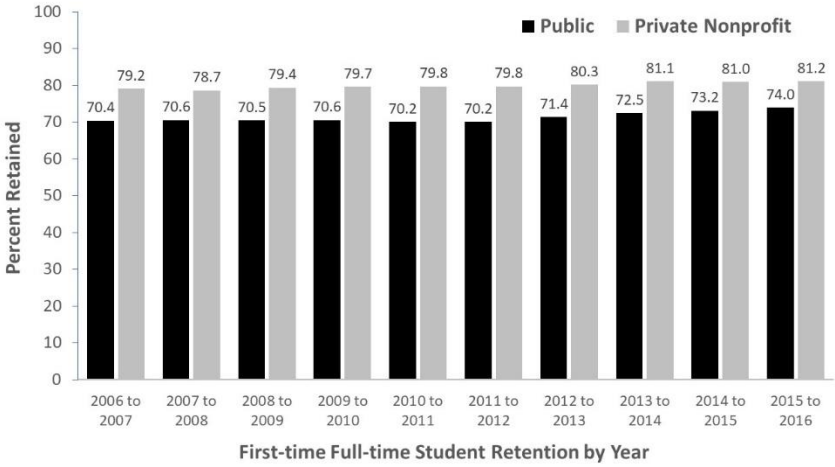
On the academic side of the house, faculty quickly gravitated to the catalog of "high-impact educational practices" advocated by George D. Kuh and the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU). These are "active learning practices" such as learning communities, writing-intensive courses, undergraduate research, and ePortfolios for college coursework that at heart ensure that faculty remain firmly in control of improvements efforts. Nearly all of Kuh's high-impact practices require broad faculty buy-in and adoption. Consensus may take years to build and, then, entails many more years of curriculum development and reforms to academic programming. Eventually, I came to see quality improvements to student learning and outcomes from "high-impact educational practices" as occurring over decades.[2] Notably, Kuh and the AACU do not offer formulas to estimate the price for implementation or cost-benefit analyses to measure effectiveness of these practices. Yet, "innovative" faculties gravitate to high-impact practices as the go-to solution for student success despite, or perhaps due to, the length of time required for such transformations and without a formula to calculate the projected costs to the institution or the benefits to its students.

For the non-academic or administrative initiatives, data segmentation of retention and graduate rates by demographics, SAT scores, high school GPAs, gender or some other binary variable rarely presented a simple or definitive answer on how to improve student outcomes. In nearly every case, the presumed or preferred explanations for student success were factors external to the operations of the institutions such as pre-college SAT scores and high school GPAs. Data made these presumptions increasingly untenable when they revealed an absence of significant statistical differences. This in turn forced strategic committees to look more closely at internal business practices and institutional policies. To investigate institutional barriers to student retention, however, the committee work necessitated that the separate business units in the administration expose inefficiencies and ineffectiveness (i.e., the warts) of their operations. The limitations imposed by information technology and the student information system soon came to the fore as each administrative unit sought to shirk responsibility for the college's "low impact" practices. I witnessed firsthand in these committees how the most nominal change in business practices invites untold costs for technological infrastructure, staff retraining and strategic planning.

In spite of the untold academic and non-academic costs (and timeframes) involved in higher education reform, every college and university in the country remains subject to journalists' unsound and unproven advice to "adopt mundane but solid and proven business practices to sustain themselves."[3] There is no end to the parade of institutions on the pages of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Education* that are touted as

an example to all other institutions in the country. At the same time, there are no scientific standards and no institutional transparency to legitimate the claims made by—and on behalf of—these exemplary colleges and universities. Instead, the journalistic mind grasps widespread higher education reform as somehow always only lacking the will to flatter and imitate the latest particular archetype of the "moneyball" solution for college administration.[4]

Figure 1 | Percent of Freshman Retained in First Year

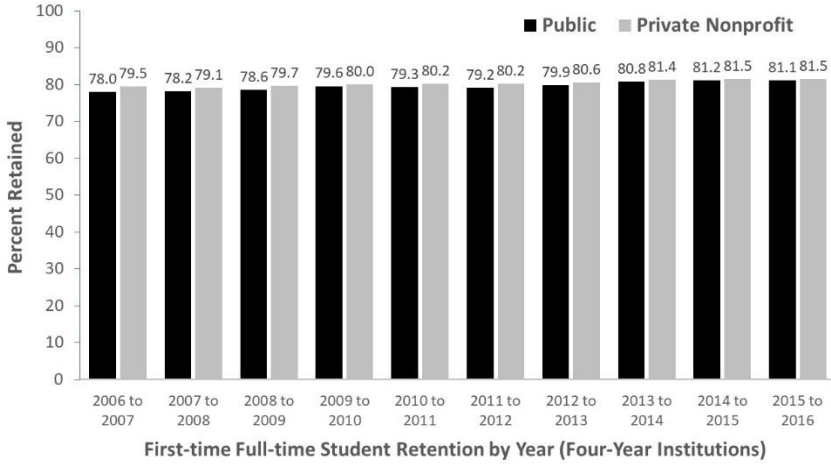


Measures of college student success, however, tell a different story at the national level. Whereas the public and academic discourses tend to chide individual colleges and universities for failing to follow the leadership of disruptors and best-practice institutions, federal data reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) demonstrate that little-to-no substantive progress has been achieved in the first-year experience and outcomes of first-year students for over a decade. The traditional college freshman is generally categorized as a first-time college-goer who enrolls full-time to earn a degree from an accredited college or university. Freshman retention then measures the persistence of a student at the same institution into their second, or sophomore, year. Each fall semester, virtually all postsecondary institutions report a count of the first-time full-time students who returned for a second-year of college to the same institution—what institutional researchers euphemistically call freshman retention. Defined in these specific terms, the freshman retention rate is a standardized measurement that applies to nearly all institutions of higher learning.

From 2006 to 2012, the national freshman retention rates at all public and

private nonprofit institutions demonstrate no systemic improvement as a measure for the first-year experience of college students (see Figure 1 above). Public institutions retained only 70.2% of freshmen enrolled for the first-time in 2011 (see "2011 to 2012" column), slightly down from the 70.4% retained from 2006 to 2007. While generally better at retaining students, private nonprofit institutions improved the first-year freshman retention by only 0.6 percentage points between 2006 to 2007 (79.2%) and 2011 to 2012 (79.8%). Only during the past four years have higher education institutions reported notable, if not substantial, improvements in freshman retention as a whole. The aggregate retention rate for private nonprofit colleges have increased to 81.2%, while that of public colleges moved up to 74.0% for the cohort enrolled from 2015 to 2016.[5]

Figure 2 | Percent of Freshman at 4-Year Institutions Retained in First Year

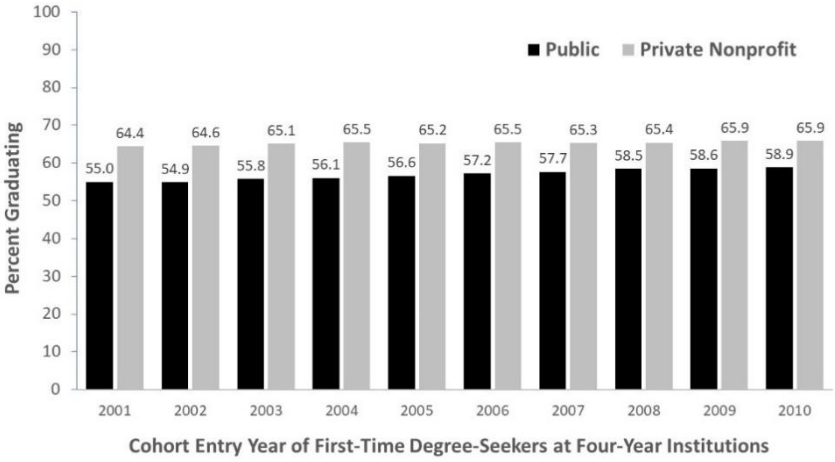


The annual public ritual of college admissions and the intense competition for acceptance to the most prestigious or preferred colleges in the nation takes place at the four-year baccalaureate-granting institutions. Unlike open admissions at two-year or community colleges, the four-year institutions typically have more resources to educate students as well as the cachet to entice more applicants than may be accepted for enrollment due to seat limits at the institution. These are the "selective" or "highly selective" colleges and universities that many industry experts and rankings regard as the highest quality higher education institutions in the country.

The first-year retention rate at the four-year institutions that ostensibly have the power and inclination to "craft" the incoming freshman class each year have made only nominal improvements over the past decade (see Figure

2 above). Four-year public institutions recorded incremental improvements over the past ten years, raising their freshman retention rate as a whole from 78.0% to 81.1% from 2007 to 2016. Four-year private institutions similarly increased their collective freshman retention rate from 79.5% to 81.5% between 2007 and 2016. While two to three percentage points for the national cohort reflect improved first-year experiences for thousands of college-goers during the past ten years, these figures also serve as a testament to the rigidity or inelasticity of retention rates at American colleges and universities. In general, freshman retention rates have remained stubbornly fixed despite the millions upon millions of dollars that institutions paid to private sector companies for admissions and enrollment services before and after the advent of "moneyball" analytics.[6]

Figure 3 | Percent Graduating Six Years after Start at 4-Year Institutions



The retention of eight-in-ten freshmen each year on first appearance seems like a perfectly reasonable goal or measure of success for higher education institutions. Perhaps, one-in-five first-year students are just not cut out for or meant to attend college. This perspective, however, neglects to consider that the potential for attrition, or non-retention, occurs over the entire course of a student's higher education. For this reason, the college graduation rate is the better indicator for significant and permanent improvements to the effectiveness of a higher education institution. The standard measure for college graduation rates allots 150% of normal time for degree completion, or six years, for an incoming freshman to complete a four-year baccalaureate degree. Like the freshman retention rates, the graduation rates in American higher education are based to the student

cohorts that enroll for the first-time in full-time coursework at a college or university.

Public four-year institutions have routinely underperformed in comparison to private four-year institutions (see Figure 3 above). For instance, the freshman cohort from 2001 had until 2007 to earn a baccalaureate degree, but little more than one-in-two (55%) first-time college-goers at public colleges and universities graduated within six years. While incremental improvements have been reported in subsequent years, less than six-in-ten (58.9%) of the freshmen enrolled in college for the first time in 2010 earned a bachelor's degree by 2016. Whereas nearly two-in-three first-time college-goers to private nonprofit institutions graduate within 6 years, the graduation rate for the private sector of higher education improved by less than two percentage points: from 64.4% to 65.9% between 2007 and 2016 (or, for the 2001 to 2010 cohorts). Here, as with freshman retention rates, the relative lack of variance in college graduation rates from year to year is the most significant statistic that calls for further research and explanation.[7]

The scholars and news periodicals that focus intensely on the radical (and apparent) transformation at a single institution simply neglect to theorize or study seriously what works in American higher education as a system. The underlying premise of laudatory articles about the heroic transformation at one particular institution suggests that most institutions may copy and implement the organizational strategy to like effect. More importantly, expectations for radical transformations at the institutional level naively overlook the extent to which improvements at one college come at the expense of other colleges in the larger ecosystem of higher education or fail to consider how external factors outside the control of individual institutions influence college student performance in general.

A comparison of the cohort graduation rates of first-time college-goers by college's level of selectivity from 2006 and 2010 illustrates the zero-sum tendency of improvements within a system of higher education (see Table 1 below). As is evident in the graduation rates at both public and private institutions, the arbitrary power to determine who attends college has a significant impact on the probabilities of success for college students. More importantly, the incremental improvement in graduation rates between 2006 and 2010 correlate with the selectivity of the institutions and primarily have come at the expense of institutions with open admissions or those that admit 25% to 49.9% of applicants. Public universities that admit less than 25% of applicants secured the largest gains (+10.2 percentage points) in student completion rates, while the less selective institutions (less than 50% but not open admission) made more modest gains (0.4 to 1.7 percentage points). These gains may have come at the expense of the public institutions that practice open admissions (-1.4 percentage points) and those that historically served students a tier below the standards of the most highly selective

institutions (25.0% to 49.9% acceptance rates; -1.9 percentage points).[8]

Table 1 | Change in Graduation Rates at 4-Year Institutions by Admissions Selectivity, 2006 and 2010

	Cohort Entry Year		
Selectivity	**2006**	**2010**	**Change**
Open Admissions	32.2	30.8	-1.4
90% or more	47.9	48.3	0.4
75% to 89.9%	54.0	55.7	1.7
50% to 74.9%	60.0	61.2	1.2
25% to 49.9%	70.0	68.1	-1.9
Less than 25%	70.4	80.6	10.2

Public Four-Year Institutions

	Cohort Entry Year		
Selectivity	**2006**	**2010**	**Change**
Open Admissions	38.1	36.6	-1.5
90% or more	48.5	50.7	2.2
75% to 89.9%	61.1	61.6	0.5
50% to 74.9%	62.3	63.2	0.9
25% to 49.9%	77.5	74.2	-3.3
Less than 25%	90.6	91.3	0.7

Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institutions

Percent of First-Time Degree-Seeking Students from the 2006 and 2010 Cohorts Graduating within Six Years after Start

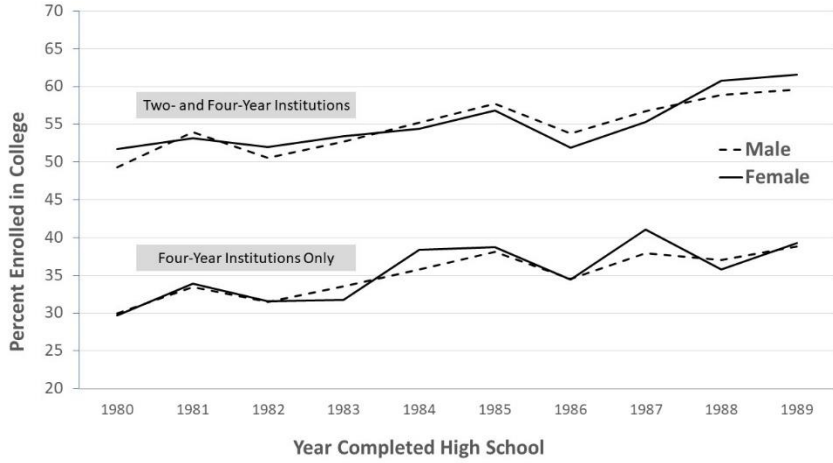
While graduation rates at private colleges segmented by the selectivity of the admissions staff have not changed as much as at public colleges, the past ten years has witnessed a convergence in the completion rates of colleges students at private and public institutions. This is to say, college graduation rates at nonprofit colleges and universities have less and less to do with the control and mission of higher education institutions—public vs. private, secular vs. sectarian, liberal arts vs. professional, etc., etc. The celebrated "competition" among colleges and universities for "college ready" applicants has done little to improve higher education or student success as a whole, while at the same time entrenching "selectivity" in college admissions as the single most important indicator for the probability of incoming first-year students to graduate from public or private four-year institutions.

Nevertheless, the recent uptick in freshman retention rates and graduation rates may lend support to the assertion that competition has had a net benefit, if minor, on college student success. As with claims of radical improvements at a single college, the incremental improvements to college student success during this decade may have little to do with the efficiency or effectiveness of internal university operations.

Over the past fifty years, the percentage of first-time college-goers whose parents attended and earned a college degree has been gradually increasing. From 1965 to 1979, the percentage of recent high school completers who enrolled in any college stood at fifty percent, while those enrolled in four-year colleges remained around thirty percent. During this fifteen-year period,

the gender demographics converged. Whereas men were more likely to attend college than women in 1965, similar proportions of men and women enrolled in college soon after completing high school in 1979. Beginning in 1980, then, the percentage of high school completers who pursued a college education tended to increase for both genders over the course of a decade (see Figure 4 below). By 1989, approximately sixty percent of high school completers went on for some form of postsecondary education, while almost forty percent of young men and women attended a four-year college or university after high school. Thereafter, the college-going rates of high school completers increased more modestly among young adults in general, while in recent decades women enrolled in college and four-year institutions more frequently than men.[9]

Figure 4 | College Enrollment Rates during the 1980s



The most recent generation of college-goers originates from the most highly-educated generation in American history. The token achievements in college student success evidenced by the nation's freshman retention and six-year graduation rates may reflect the cultural capital and college experience that parents have imparted to children rather than the miraculous disruption or targeted intervention of a new business model at some exemplary university. In point of fact, no article or study of college student success adequately controls for the zero-sum competition for college-ready students nor the socioeconomic and class privileges that separate the current generation as the most prepared for traditional measures of college success. Given these conditions, colleges and universities may be more inefficient and ineffective than in prior decades than Americans realize. In short, the U.S. higher education system perhaps has never produced more inequality—

among institutions or college-goers—than it does today.

Given that the shortcomings and failures of American higher education appear to be systemic, rather than institutional, it makes little sense for colleges and universities to invest in costly reforms to improve student outcomes at the local level. As both journalistic and academic literature routinely assert, the vast majority of institutions have proven impervious to strategic improvements to student outcomes. And, yet, the obvious limitations that the American system of higher education imposes on the separate institutions raises important questions about the extensive reform literature:

Why do public policy papers and journalism articles often emphasize themes related to the role of institutional failure in the face of national crisis for higher education? Why do policy experts and higher education scholars assume that change must be strategically designed and executed by each individual college in isolation or in voluntary systems of accountability? Why has the college presidency and executive leadership roles become lucrative professional opportunities that lure managerial and financial experts from the private sector? Why are rankings of individual colleges and universities considered meaningful annual exercises? Why do colleges and universities allocate more and more financial resources to private-sector vendors for outsourced strategic planning, recruitment, information technology, enrollment management, and student success services?

Each of the foregoing questions reveals the extent to which colleges and universities imitate business enterprises bent to the market principles of competition for both the public or private sector.

Thorstein Veblen, an American sociologist and economist active in the early twentieth century, first wrote of the possibility of American higher education being bent to the cultural values and purposes of non-academic interests one hundred years ago. In his view, the non-academic interest with the greatest potential to harm higher education was the spirit of big business or corporate capitalism. He argued that higher education had already become beholden to the "habits of thought" and "spirit" of business enterprise in the conglomerates known as universities that integrated graduate programs for the traditional arts and sciences with programs for undergraduate colleges, professional schools, and vocational training. One hundred years later, Veblen would not be surprised to learn that academic experts measure higher education something like the "gross product" of the individual colleges or universities understood as separate business enterprises—to wit, higher learning firms.[10]

One group of higher education scholars and administrators proposed an alternative to the concept of higher education as a market composed of discrete business enterprises. As I argue, in *Outsourcing Student Success*,[11] the profession of institutional research originated in a wider effort to apply social

scientific principles to the study of higher learning and its administration—that is, directly out of the culture of science native to higher learning. Following its inception in the Bureau of Institutional Research at the University of Illinois in 1918, the field progressed on a trajectory consonant with the development of a scientific paradigm for fifty years. In the earliest years, institutional researchers largely worked in isolation from each other and focused on how to study the diverse programs and departments within a university. By midcentury, breaking free of the insularity, scholars and practitioners increasingly shared their studies, methods, and findings in publications and at meetings of regional associations for accreditation.

In response to the national call to democratize higher education by the Truman Commission,[12] statewide studies introduced sector-wide strategic planning and coordination that encouraged the standardization of measurements for the extrinsic qualities of colleges and universities. These research efforts made it possible to think systematically and scientifically about higher education as a whole. By the early 1960s, researchers began to study the intrinsic qualities of higher education that defined institutional excellence and explore how systems of higher education could adopt policies to improve higher learning and its administration. By the mid-1960s, at the first professional forums organized on a regular and independent basis, institutional researchers took steps to form themselves into a scientific community for the study of higher education. It appeared that higher education as a field of study, like other social sciences, was moving toward a system of administration based on the principles of scientific investigation: theory development, empirical analysis, replicable experimentation, logical conclusions, peer review, incremental change, and the progressive accumulation of knowledge about how colleges work.

The institutional research alternative to business enterprise in higher education faltered, irreparably, after the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) organized in the mid-1960s. The new national organization soon fell under the control of academic scholars who opposed coordinated, system-wide innovations in American higher education. These critics of higher education reform characterized institutional research as an instrument of the "managerial revolution" in higher education. They dismissed fifty years of progressive gains by institutional research as an encroachment on faculty traditions and control: "While the ideology of institutional research thus stresses its importance as a 'basis for decision,' in actual practice such research also serves as a means of implementing courses of action already decided upon." The attack on institutional research aimed straight at the heart of its aspirations to introduce scientific principles to the study and administration of higher education. Institutional research, the scholars of the AIR stated, was a "staff" function to inform decision making at one particular institution, distinct from scholarly research, and largely incapable of

producing knowledge with "lasting and pervasive significance." In short, institutional research is "an art, not a science."[13]

Paradoxically, higher education scholars became the champions of the principles of business enterprise for higher education administration. They assumed leadership of the national association for institutional research by the early 1970s, making the organization into a formidable opponent to the utilization of scientific methods for the study of higher education systems. The once-promising profession began a long decline toward irrelevance during the subsequent fifty years of college administration.

In a policy paper delivered to the Institute for Higher Education Policy as part of its series "Envisioning the National Postsecondary Data Infrastructure in the 21st Century," a former executive director of the AIR suggested that institutional research offices should take their "lessons from prior disruptive innovations" in higher education: "the printing field changed quickly when desktop publishing turned personal computers into personal printing presses." Presented as an example to institutional researchers, the "savvy print shop manager…understood that some decline in professionalism was overcome by the quantity of communications that institutions were able to create." Similarly, mainframe computing gave way to network computing, reducing "top-down control." Resigned to a future of further deprofessionalization for institutional researchers, the centennial of the first centralized office of institutional research in 2018 passed mostly unnoticed by the AIR, higher education scholars, and the general public at large.[14]

In one respect, then, this work is a natural sequel to my previous work on the history of institutional research during the past one hundred years. In that volume, I relied on the framework of historiography defined by scientific revolutions and paradigm shifts as first proposed by Thomas Kuhn.[15] The first fifty years of institutional research history suits Kuhn's schema for a paradigm shift in a field of scientific inquiry. The last fifty years of institutional research history, however, gradually broke from the parameters of what constitutes science and scientific practice. Understandably, as a historian of science, Kuhn did not provide much insight on the social forces that could transform a science into an art, as happened for the field of institutional research. The conclusion of my first book therefore only hints at a deeper and nonscientific revolution in higher education: a shift in ideological orientation from the liberal principles of scientific inquiry to the illiberal commitments of business enterprise.

The transformation of institutional research from science into art directly traces to the ascendancy of what I call "the moral philosophy of institutional autonomy" in higher education scholarship. As I observed in the epilogue to *Outsourcing Student Success*, this moral philosophy celebrates "each higher education institution…[as] unique" and proposes as a normative imperative

that each college or university be allowed to pursue its mission in the absence of direct state control, intervention or oversight. As I wrote, "The proposition is not itself offered as a testable hypothesis in a theory of higher education. There is no effort to define institutional uniqueness, or any prior experiment or scholarship cited, that reveals the uniqueness of each higher education institution. To the contrary, each institution's uniqueness derives entirely from stakeholders' 'justifiable claim' about the 'nature of things' in higher education—or what common sense can tell anyone about higher education as an 'object of study.'" [16] It is important to recognize, however, that the moral philosophy of institutional autonomy is only one priority in the larger ideological commitment to the principles of business enterprise in higher education scholarship. Claims about the uniqueness of institutions and the necessity of institutional autonomy speak directly to those who exercise power over the American system of higher education.

The tenured faculty in the disciplines and institutes of higher education occupy a special place in colleges and universities. They produce knowledge about the nature and functions of higher learning as if they are disinterested in the usefulness or application of that knowledge. In other words, they claim to dispassionately research and write about the institutional autonomy of higher education institutions, and the related concepts of departmental autonomy and academic freedom, despite having a direct personal stake in the outcome of their inquiries. Indeed, scholars and faculty have utilized this exceptional privilege as a means to jealously guard their self-defined prerogatives as the "experts" of higher education. Chapters 1 through 3 explore how scholarship on the nature of higher education and the moral imperative attached to institutional autonomy evolved in response to the perceived threats to faculty power during the late twentieth century. In many respects, what generally passes as settled knowledge about higher education policymaking oftentimes reflects the perceived threats to faculty solidarity and interests. More surprisingly, however, the intellectual origins of higher education scholarship trace back to the larger socially and politically conservative discourse that criticized New Deal programs in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.

As a moral philosophy, the tenets of institutional autonomy did not directly resolve any flaws or injustices in the American system of higher education, but demanded a certain level of vigilance and a call to collective action among its adherents. Thomas R. McConnell, the first director of The Center for Studies in Higher Education organized in 1957 at University of California, Berkeley, observed how faculty and college executives regard institutional autonomy as persistently under threat from both internal and external stakeholders in higher education:

> Turmoil and disruption on the campuses; political action by students and faculty members; severe shrinkages in governmental, corporate, and

> individual incomes, coupled with rising taxes; and mounting distrust of higher education by the public are behind the increasing demand for colleges and universities to justify what they are doing and to disclose the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations. Perhaps as never before, institutions, administrators, faculty members, and even students find themselves accountable to a wide range of both internal and external agencies. Institutions and faculties, much to their concern and distress, have discovered that their autonomy is by no means absolute, and that in fact it is often highly vulnerable.[17]

This passage, written by McConnell in 1971, expresses the tensions between institutional autonomy and accountability in terms that remain as relevant today as fifty years ago. Chapters 4 through 6 review how scholars of higher education perceived internal and external threats to institutional autonomy and faculty power during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Notably, an important aspect of this literature endeavored to build solidarity among faculty in general by fostering a sense of accountability to a set of self-prescribed professional standards of conduct. To this end, the scholarship addressed questions such as who qualified as faculty in the university community, what limits to academic freedom are appropriate, what kind of power faculty exercised, and how that power should be used to discipline the non-academic constituents at each (unique) college and university.

In another respect, as McConnell's quote suggests, the concept of institutional autonomy deliberately makes colleges and universities vulnerable to a set of external social, political and market forces beyond the control of the ivory tower—the culture of business enterprise. Advocates of institutional autonomy routinely gainsaid the scientific study of higher education and rejected the systemwide coordination of higher education administration. The administration of colleges and universities have then gradually become subject to technology and financial markets that rely on the annual production of college enrollments to boost profit margins. Chapters 7 through 9 then conclude with a look at the way that institutional autonomy perpetuates social inequalities and rewards certain stakeholders who profit most from the hegemonic culture of business enterprise in American higher education. The conservativism of faculty, as Clark Kerr noted, favors the status quo in higher education organization and management. That does not mean that the higher education system proved insusceptible to change, but rather that change occurred on a trajectory that reinforced the prejudices and priorities of the dominant ideology: business enterprise. In the final analysis, the federal system of college student loans that took shape during the 1980s and 1990s offers the best evidence for the hegemonic consolidation of American higher education under the principles of business enterprise.

Today, the paramount intellectual challenge for American higher education still turns on whether the culture of science prevails or the culture

of business enterprise remains ascendant in college administration. The decline of institutional research arguably unfolded in the larger context of the conservative political and ideological agenda advanced by scholars, policymakers, and other stakeholders in American higher education. In lieu of scientific study and system coordination, proponents of business enterprise have advocated for traditional market principles—institutional autonomy, organized anarchy, and private benefits—for each and every college and university in the country. Moreover, this moral philosophy of institutional autonomy upholds the vague sense of uniqueness—in mission, history, purpose, and faculty—as explanation for the complexity of higher education and the commonsense decision making locally and in general. The impotence of higher education reform and the nominal improvements in student outcomes in American higher education during the past fifty years has routinely been addressed by the received wisdom that counsels that the only solution for the failures and injustices arising from the principles of business enterprise in higher education is a renewed commitment to the moral philosophy of institutional autonomy. As a first step toward a corrective, the Epilogue concludes with an insider's perspective on the reasons that institutional change eludes college leadership and how college-goers may be able to trigger the restructuring of financial and administrative practices to create a more equitable system in American higher education.