

## Chapter 42

# The Changing Mission and Nature of Partnerships in Public Universities

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### ABSTRACT

*Reasons for public education are many; however, to crystalize and synthesize this, quite simply, public education is for the public good. The goal, or mission, of public education is to offer truth and enlightenment for students, including adult learners. Public education in the United States has undergone many changes over the course of the last 200 years, and now public education is under scrutiny and is facing a continual lack of funding from the states. It is due to these issues that public higher education is encouraging participatory corporate partnerships, or neo-partnerships, that will fund the university, but may expect a return on investment for private shareholders, or an expectation that curriculum will be contrived and controlled by the neo-partnerships. A theoretical framework of an academic mission and a business mission is explained, the impact of privatization within the K-12 model on public higher education, the comparison of traditional and neo-partnerships, the shift in public higher education towards privatization, a discussion of university boards, and the business model as the new frame for a public university. A public university will inevitably have to choose between a traditional academic mission that has served the nation for quite some time and the new business mission, which may have negative implications for students, academic freedom, tenure, and faculty-developed curriculum.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is transformative and emancipating, and higher educational institutions are renowned for being the bastions of knowledge. In the United States, there are some, if not the most notable universities in the world, from the halls of Ivy League to the public universities that exist within every state. Universities in the United States offer a wide variety of study programs and host a diverse student population, inclusive of international students.

There are many reasons why public higher education should remain intact. It is the interpretation of these researchers that public education's purpose is twofold: (1) enlightenment and (2) truth. With enlightenment and truth, education becomes emancipating in that:

*Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Aristotle, "Democracy Aristotle Quotes," p. 61).*

With enlightenment, truth, and emancipation, a society will enjoy a sense of social justice through governmental democracy. According to John Dewey (1966), in order to be able to elect viable individuals in a representative democracy, and have a repartee with these officials, the electorate must be educated.

Thomas Jefferson was very aware of how education was integral to democratic governmental functioning. In that, the only way for democracy to survive is through enlightenment, with elected individuals who have the best interest of the electorate in mind, and will act in an honest matter, with the electorate being educated no matter their life circumstances, and the populace bearing the poor (Padover, 1952).

*If we can imagine the premise of a democratic state, then the idea of ethics is implied in that "A state is not a mere society, having common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange...Political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of mere companionship (Aristotle, "Democracy Aristotle Quotes," p. 31).*

Therefore, a theoretical framework of an academic mission and a business mission is explained, the impact of privatization within the K-12 model on public higher education, the comparison of traditional and neo-partnerships, the shift in public higher education towards privatization, a discussion of university boards, and the business model as the new frame for a public university. A public university will inevitably have to choose between a traditional academic mission that has served the nation for quite some time, or the new business mission, which may have negative implications for students, academic freedom, tenure, and faculty developed curriculum.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ACADEMIC MISSION VS. THE BUSINESS MISSION

There are higher educational institutions that seem to be changing their academic mission for more of a business mission. A mission is the way in which an organization describes its core relevance. The mission of a university is to educate students, and if it is really cut to its core, the mission of a public university is the search for truth and enlightenment, and to ensure the public good. The university is a public trust for all of society. An example of a mission statement, taken from the University of Indiana at Bloomington reads:

*Bloomington is the flagship residential, doctoral-extensive campus of Indiana University. Its mission is to create, disseminate, preserve, and apply knowledge. It does so through its com-*

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