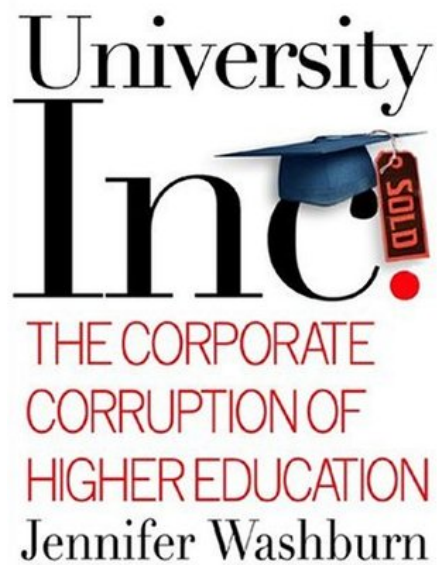




University, Inc: The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education

Jennifer Washburn

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Our federal and state tax dollars are going to fund higher education. If corporations kick in a little more, should they be able to dictate the research or own the discoveries? During the past two decades, commercial forces have quietly transformed virtually every aspect of academic life. Corporate funding of universities is growing and the money comes with strings attached. In return for this funding, universities and professors are acting more and more like for-profit patent factories: university funds are shifting from the humanities and the less profitable science departments into research labs, and the skill of teaching is valued less and less. Slowly but surely, universities are abandoning their traditional role as disinterested sources of education, alternative perspectives, and wisdom. This growing influence of corporations over universities affects more than just today's college students (and their parents); it compromises the future of all those whose careers depend on a university education, and all those who will be employed, governed, or taught by the products of American universities.

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John says

The majority of this book is devoted to the relationship between corporations and medical/technological researchers in Higher Education. Her one chapter on the shrinking of Humanities departments (chapter 8) is not sufficient to make this a book on the corporatization of the university as a whole.

Jeff says

A great book and a resource about the monetization of education and education resources. Definitely worth a read. Washburns only problem is that her passion sometimes defines her reporting, this is not an even-handed book by any means.

anne says

excellent. really important. very depressing. really focuses mostly on science & technology but also mentions the impacts on oter disciplines.

Charlotte says

extremely well documented assessment of the influence of business on educational institutions. a bit of a niche topic but if you're interested in how academia can be manipulated by money, this is the book to read.

Wellington says

This has to be one of the saddest books I've read in a while. It's beautifully ironic. This book comes along and laments of the conflicts of interests with the marriage of universities and business while I am learning to embrace that I can love to have money.

I graduated from the University of Southern California and had a sense that something was amiss in the university system. Back then, I saw a university that catered strongly to the football program and felt like I was getting the scraps. The football program brought in the money and with the latest successes some immeasurable advertising.

However, there was an uneasy truce of advancing education and earning money. A university gets all excited about a new corporate sponsor giving millions to a department. But what if the corporate sponsor stipulates that the money be spent on research for the advancement of the sponsor's own products? Or that any breakthroughs from the research would be considered the assets of the sponsor's? And what happens when a professor mentoring graduate students is an owner of a private company?

In the former scenario, the research would have a STRONG affinity toward saying something positive about the sponsor's product. What department would say something bad about their sponsor even if research says so? There's statistics that would be some bias. In the second scenario, the spirit of research/education in a university environment is stymied and looks more like competing departments in a business or competing businesses. Instead of open sharing of ideas at the local coffeehouse, students are making fake notes to disguise their research from each other. In the final scenario, we may have a professor who only supports a thesis that supports his stock portfolio.

I recommend the book for anyone who is in the process of higher education or thinking of going in that direction. It could turn your head. There's a whole lot of research and data in this book that began to numb my brain. I give the book 4 stars because it was difficult to read – perhaps more because of the revelation of the corruption of higher education. It will make a lot of you sick.

Slareck says

A superb piece of investigative journalism exploring the encroachment of corporate/market values into the university and the resulting implications. It is not some kind of leftist corporate bashing, nor is it a wistful yearning for a "pure" liberal arts model, but a clear-headed assessment of how several trends converged to create a "market-model u" and some instances of the problems that has presented.

The trends specifically mentioned include: the reduction of federal spending on higher ed, the birth of biotechnology & the realized potential for pulling in millions in patenting & licensing innovations born in universities, the transition from an industrial to a "knowledge" economy where ideas/research were deemed to be more valuable than capital and industry, and finally the passage of the Bayh-Dole Act in 1980, when universities began granting exclusive licenses to private firms, regardless of whether the research was funded out of public funds.

Washburn does not want to see all ownership of intellectual property to belong to the federal government or remain locked up in the academy, but is concerned that the commercial temptation (i.e. greed) will corrupt the public mission of universities and researchers. Problems include neglecting the pursuance of monetarily unprofitable knowledge on the fringes, erosion of the necessary distance from the market which objectively criticizes and checks abuses--especially in medicine, and failing to share research (with the public as well as other researchers) in favor of exclusive licensing to businesses strictly for reasons of profit.

A lively read and essential for those seeking to understand the contemporary culture of obsession with research in higher education today. Although she does only devote one chapter to the implications of this shift for the humanities & liberal arts, there are other books covering this from the trenches, including *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*, *Liberal Arts at the Brink*, and *Saving Higher Education in the Age of Money*.

Salut Muhidin says

Nice book to read and learn about the new and future trends in the higher education, case for USA. Yet, the Inc seems will be found in other places in the world.

Khouloud Khammassi says

The promise of reading about the corporate corruption in Education was the reason why I wanted to read this book. Trust me, if you love academic gossip (as I call it), you won't be disappointed. There is a lot to read and know and the writer is an excellent job. This book is worth the money and time on spends on it. Now, why I gave three stars only. It's as simple. There are no chapters on "zionism" in the U.S. educational system. How does this relate to corporate corruption? I let you figure out :-)
