Ripped apart

The trends deprofessionalizing faculty and staff are hurting students, too.

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OUR MISSION
The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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EDITOR’S NOTE

Fighting to do our jobs

ON SO MANY LEVELS, and in so many places, higher education is in deep trouble. Young people feel they can’t afford to go to college, and, for a large number, it’s true. A huge majority of students leave college with debts that limit their choices about where to live and work from the day after they graduate.

Remember the old notion of higher education funding being a shared partnership between government (state and federal), institutions, private sources, and students and families? That’s faded as the partners have pulled back, shifting the burden onto the backs of students.

Another notion that is under question is the place of faculty at the center of the enterprise, guiding the academic mission of providing teaching, research and service.

The last charming artifact of better times in higher education is the idea that education is a public good that benefits civic and economic life as much as the individual, and thus deserves public investment and protection.

Not to be too cynical, but for many of the folks leveraging power today, higher education is viewed as a source of private gain for financial institutions like Sallie Mae and Wells Fargo, and for for-profit education groups like the Apollo Group, Education Management Corporation, Coursera and Pearson. Heck, as Sen. Elizabeth Warren is loudly noting, even the U.S. government is raking in profits on student lending that it is not distributing to serve education goals. The bill she has just introduced, the Bank on Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act, would address that.

Given their place at the heart of the enterprise, faculty and academic staff—the frontline education professionals—should be in the best position to frame and articulate what’s at stake in this battle over the future of higher education. But, faculty systematically have been disarmed and demonized, robbed of their voice on professional matters, and enervated by the whittling away of academic freedom, tenure, governance and job security.

Deprofessionalization examples abound:

- In 2011, administrators at Kean University in New Jersey asked faculty to produce time sheets to prove that they were working at least 35 hours a week. An incredulous KU Federation of Teachers fought back. (National news coverage noted that the average work week for faculty is 48.5 hours.)
- In 2012, the American Association of University Professors-AFT chapter at Rutgers University learned that the administration had entered into a seven-year secret contract with Pearson to provide online degree programs. The contract let Rutgers and Pearson split the revenues. The union fought back.
- Pearson, a private, British-based company, is drawing profits from all over the U.S. education system—from administering testing associated with the K-12 Common Core State Standards, to the edTPA assessment of teacher performance in New York and other states, to the modularization of course offerings at Miami-Dade College (an opportunity provided by the Florida Legislature).
- The adoption of new, watered-down course sequences for graduation at the City University of New York (Pathways) and the State University of New York (Open SUNY), without the consultation of faculty.
- The embrace of massive open online courses and other online delivery methods that go around traditional faculty roles and disaggregate teaching and learning processes.

These circumventions around the faculty and staff’s traditional roles are nothing compared with the massive end run of converting the full-time tenured academic corps into a contingent, underpaid, undersupported workforce with very little say over academic matters affecting student success.

In this issue, we explore the implications of broadscale deprofessionalization. We close with a report on the annual AFT higher ed issues conference, where ideas crystallized about how we must fight for our students and our profession. The theme was reclaiming the promise of a higher education system once touted as the envy of the world.

Economist Jared Bernstein, a keynote speaker, described how the interests of a very few—the 1 percent—are holding hostage the health of our economy. AFT members really “get” what’s going on in this increasingly stratified world, he said, urging educators to start barking an alarm for the rest of Americans who are not paying as close attention.

The toll taken on educational quality when our members are deprofessionalized is mounting. It’s time to start barking and reclaim the promise of higher education.

—BARBARA McKENNA
YOU’VE LIKELY HEARD the horror stories from the K-12 world: Students reduced to data points; teachers defined through algorithms. Evaluations based on the latest trend in questionable science—value-added modeling, or VAM. Seasoned, well-respected educators losing their jobs because of officials emphasizing testing over teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, this bad idea has legs—it isn’t limited to K-12 anymore. Proposed “reforms” in higher education are strikingly similar to K-12 accountability systems already in place, with a disturbing focus on high-stakes testing. These proposals come from many of the same people who push austerity, polarization, privatization and deprofessionalization in their quest to convert our system of higher education into one that is defined as a profitable commodity.

Some are calling it “No Child Left Behind goes to college.” Regardless of the name, let’s stop bad ideas from becoming bad policy.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan recently announced plans for new regulations to assess teacher preparation programs that would be based on the test scores of their graduates’ students. Programs that graduate teachers with low student test scores would lose their federal funding.

While the Obama administration’s focus on assessing teacher preparation programs is correct, the proposed methodology is nothing more than a quick-fix, test-and-punish, market-based approach recycled from the highly flawed, data-driven policies of K-12 teacher evaluations.

If implemented, these regulations could drastically alter teacher preparation programs. As noted by Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond, programs would be given a perverse incentive “to stop training special education teachers, bilingual teachers, teachers for very high-need schools and others whom we know are likely to net lower VAM scores, ... just as medical schools would stop training AIDS physicians and start moving to suburban pediatrics if they were going to be rated on the mortality rates of patients.”

The proposed methodology is nothing more than a quick-fix, test-and-punish, market-based approach recycled from the highly flawed, data-driven policies of K-12 teacher evaluations.

Unfortunately, the bad ideas don’t end there.

Last summer, the Obama administration unveiled a proposal to rate higher education institutions based on graduation rates, graduate earnings, student loan debt and the number of students to receive Pell Grants. And like ratings for K-12 schools and the proposal for teacher preparation programs, these ratings would determine levels of federal funding.

As you well know, our higher education system is made up of a wide range of institutions and programs that offer educational opportunities to a diverse group of people—a strength that would be undermined by any efforts to homogenize.

The questions abound: How would this proposal account for different institutional missions, such as open-access community colleges, historically black colleges and universities, and Hispanic-serving institutions? What about developmental education or non-degree seeking learning?

A recent Gallup/Inside Higher Ed poll, found that 65 percent of college presidents feel that this proposal is not sound policy. They cited concerns that the plan—which is purportedly intended to increase access, reduce costs and improve outcomes—would reward more-affluent institutions while penalizing those that serve lower socioeconomic groups and nontraditional students. That doesn’t sound like improved access, reduced costs and better outcomes to me.

Taken together, the results of these proposed reforms could be disastrous for students, faculty, and academic staff and communities.

What we need is real solution-driven change.

When it comes to teacher preparation pro-

The Obama administration needs to hear from you about how these proposals will do more harm than good. And with a fast-track timeline, the time to act is now, to stop these bad ideas from becoming our new higher education reality.

Action begins with a conversation—followed by an email to your colleagues, your friends, your family; a letter to your local newspaper; or a phone call to your state or federal legislator.

It’s time to reclaim the promise of higher education by ensuring that all students have access to high-quality and affordable higher education, through fostering diverse institutions that provide a richer educational environment for all students. An accessible, affordable and high-quality system of public higher education is critical to the health of the nation.

We need your voice.
Reorganizing higher education and society

BY GARY RHOADES

THE SHAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, as of society, is changing. In our not-for-profit institutions, policymakers and managers are working to reorganize academic employment to at-will, just-in-time, pay-for-performance work. They are reorganizing colleges and universities to operate like businesses seeking to maximize institutional revenues and minimize investment in instruction. This model serves corporate business’s needs. But it’s a disservice to a large portion of our student populations, particularly the growing number of low-income, underserved populations that are seeking educational opportunity.

At the same time, academic employees are pushing back. We are working collectively to re-establish working conditions—including academic freedom—that enhance educational quality, student learning and success. We are also working to reorganize colleges and universities: to prioritize students’ education, reduce students’ debt and expand affordable, high-quality higher education for all. The battles raging in education are like those in other service sectors, with whom we must form common cause.

Transformation of the professoriate

Over the past four decades, a systematic deterioration in the structure and working conditions of the professoriate has occurred. This has coincided with a systemic disinvestment in public higher education and, in particular, in instruction. The disinvestment is such that there is a structural deficit, evident in massive student debt. Access to higher education is increasingly stratified by class, and educational opportunities for un- and underserved potential college students—a group growing in number—is increasingly compromised.

The changes in the professoriate are well-known:

- The disproportionate growth of faculty working in part-time positions, such that they now account for roughly half of the professoriate. ¹
- The growth in full-time nontenure-track positions, with these faculty accounting for 19 percent of the professoriate. During the late 1990s, full-time nontenure-track faculty accounted for 58.9 percent of new full-time hires in the professoriate. ²
- The growing reliance on—but diminished employment prospects of—graduate teaching assistants, graduate research assistants and postdocs. At one time, graduate employee and postdoc positions could rightly be considered apprenticeships leading eventually to tenure-track appointments. That is no longer the case.

If you do the math, then you see that most professors are teaching off the tenure track, without hope of tenure and with limited to no job security. They are teaching at the will—and too often the whim—of the employer. That means they are teaching without the protections of academic freedom and without substantial involvement in basic academic and educational governance matters.

Losing ground on governance

Underlying the numbers story is professors’ declining influence in the various realms of academic and educational decision-making. Partially in response to state disinvestment in higher education, demands for accountability, and the infusion of high-technology delivery systems, administrators have increased their exercise of “strategic” managerial discretion. That discretion has involved applying the logic of the market to academic decision-making, thereby reducing—and not uncommonly, overriding and replacing—the role and plans of faculty in various academic and educational matters.

Managerial discretion has expanded into educational and even pedagogical realms, in ways that dramatize the reduced influence of

Gary Rhoades, a professor and director of the University of Arizona Center for the Study of Higher Education, is the past president of the American Association of University Professors.
faculty on the direction of their colleges and universities. These realms include enrollment management, the development of offices of instructional assessment, teaching centers, and centers for learning and instructional technologies. Contingent faculty are completely excluded from these processes, while tenure-track faculty frequently opt out of them, partly because of speeded up demands for teaching and research productivity, and partly because they recognize that they have no real influence on these decision-making realms.

Whatever the cause, the effect is that faculty are losing control over even that most basic realm of their jurisdiction, the classroom. Managers make various decisions about course management systems, about the purchase of new instructional technologies, and about the outfitting of classrooms—places where faculty reign, but over which they have little or no control.

Reduced faculty control is particularly clear in traditional distance education, massive open online courses, and decisions to outsource segments of the general education curriculum to Pearson or other third-parties, often for-profit providers. In each of these cases, academic managers have developed structures and created mechanisms to bypass effective faculty decision-making related to the curriculum. Exceptions can be found, and collective bargaining agreements can build in protections against this. But the pattern is a strong one, and the growth of these high-tech infusions is linked to the furthering of contingency in academe. The model of high-tech employment is a just-in-time, just-in-the-need in academe. The public purpose of public institutions

The fate of faculty and professionals is inextricably linked to keeping high-quality, affordable healthcare and higher education available to people of modest means, who are the growth population and the majority in the schools. These are the people privatized higher education is turning its back on more and more, tracking them into dead-end, short-cycle certificates, or turning them over to the predatory for-profits that are only too happy to sweep up their Pell Grant money.

Recently, for the first time in two decades, faculty at two large public research universities have unionized—the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Oregon (both in joint AFT/AAUP campaigns and units, and in Illinois in conjunction with the IFT). Both sites featured significant solidarity among contingent and tenure-track faculty.

What is more, the successful two-day strike this spring at UIC highlights what is at stake—the public purposes of public universities. As UIC United Faculty leaders Lennard Davis and Walter Benn Michaels wrote in the online magazine Jacobin: “Unlike the flagships of state universities around the country... we don’t think our job is mainly to educate the children of the upper middle class....” [W]hen we [the faculty and the administration] put together a ‘Strategic Thinking Report’ back in 2005 we explicitly said we’re not looking to recruit ‘better’ students; we want to do a better job of educating the students we have. The UIC faculty is committed to that mission. And the whole point of the strike is to help us fulfill it.”

Davis and Benn Michaels also make the point that although they are part of a union that uses the tag line “A Union of Professionals”—professionals, as distinct from workers—“what we’ve all begun to realize is that, whatever it meant in the late 19th and early 20th century, in the 21st century that distinction is pure ideology. Professionals are workers—and professors are workers.” That identification is at the heart of the work UIC faculty have
While we recognize the unique burdens imposed on adjunct faculty today, we are coming to realize that all in this academy are contingent.

**Metro organizing**

In the new world of successful organizing, there is a dimension of coalition building and an explicit connection with students. Building coalitions requires faculty to show how what is happening in higher education involves turning the academic away from its public mission. Faculty have framed their working conditions as significant not simply for them but for the students and communi-
A PROFESSION IS SOMETIMES defined as an occupational group whose membership is limited to those who have undergone years of specialized training as well as considerable indoctrination designed to promote acceptance of the group’s code of conduct. Many public and not-for-profit institutions, and some for-profit institutions as well, are built around an elite profession—engineers, physicians, economists and the like—whose members actually carry out the institution’s core tasks. Typically, the members of this professional stratum believe that their norms should determine institutional conduct and will resist efforts by managers to deviate from professionally defined standards. In hospitals, for example, physicians frequently oppose efforts by administrators and insurers to base patient-care decisions upon ability to pay, staff convenience, bed utilization policies and other factors inconsistent with medically accepted criteria.

Students of bureaucracy have often observed that organizations that delegate power to professionals who are actually trained to implement the entity’s mission generally perform more effectively than those in which decision-making authority is centralized in the hands of managers and administrators. Look at the old General Motors, for example, which was run (into the ground) by administrators at company headquarters while its engineers were powerless. In a similar vein, the ongoing shift in decision-making power from physicians to administrators in hospitals and other healthcare entities very likely diminishes the quality of care received by patients.

The administrative takeover

In recent years, of course, the power of educational professionals in America’s colleges and universities has declined sharply relative to that of administrators. This shift in power within the university from academic professionals to administrators has been an unmitigated disaster for higher education, undermining what was once the world’s greatest system of colleges and universities.

Everywhere, it seems, legions of administrators, including many who have never taught a class, are engaged in strategic planning, endlessly rewriting the school mission statement and “rebranding” their campus. All these activities waste enormous amounts of time, require hiring thousands of new “deanlets”—administrators who are not of the faculty—and, more often than not, involve the services of expensive consultants. This rebranding business is so foolish that it is difficult even to caricature. With the help of consultants, the University of Chicago School of Medicine rebranded itself “Chicago Medicine,” while my own university’s medical school rebranded itself “Hopkins Medicine.”

I hope these new brands came with consultants’ warranties. I have a feeling that the next group of administrators will want to introduce their own brands—after, that is, rewriting their schools’ mission statements.

Two recent reports point to the onward march of the administrative vandals across the wreckage of America’s campuses.

Money is not going to the classroom

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2010-11, less than 30 percent of the $449 billion went to American colleges and universities was spent on actual instruction. Indeed, for every $1 spent on instruction, $1.82 was spent on non-instructional matters including “institutional support,” i.e., the care and feeding of deanlets. If the ratio of deanlets to professors in 2010 had been the same as in 1976, there would now be nearly 400,000 fewer deanlets whose combined salaries account for one-fourth of all tuition dollars paid by students and their parents in 2010. I guess financially hard-
pressed parents can take solace in the fact that their children will have no difficulty finding deanlets with whom to work—though professors might be in short supply.

Scott Carlson, writing in the Chronicle of Higher Education, confirms this sad tale by reporting that increases in administrative staffing drove a 28 percent expansion of the higher education workforce from 2000 to 2012. This period, of course, includes several years of severe recession when colleges saw their revenues decline and many found themselves forced to make hard choices about spending. The character of these choices is evident from the data reported by Carlson. Colleges reined in spending on instruction and faculty salaries, hired more part-time adjunct faculty and fewer full-time professors, and yet, found the money to employ more and more administrators and their staff.

**A boom in services**

Much of the ongoing growth in administration, it seems, is connected with “student services.” Colleges argue that contemporary students are constantly demanding more services and amenities that may or may not have much to do with learning. At the same time, mandates and accountability demands from the federal government are forcing colleges to provide services and engage in activities that were unknown even three decades ago. These claims are not completely false. Students do benefit from academic counselors and other academic support professionals. But often they are given services they neither want nor need.

Every professor can point to examples of the foolishness and extravagance of student service activities on his or her campus. On many campuses, the student services deanlets have organized a shadow curriculum of recreational, inane and trivial courses (my personal favorite is called Learning Kitchen at one school in the Washington area) that they encourage, and sometimes even require, students to take.

As to government mandates, certainly the federal government does mandate a variety of expensive activities on the part of universities. However, as economists Robert Martin and R. Carter Hill show in an excellent 2012 paper, external cost drivers such as federal or state mandates are far less important than internal or voluntary factors, particularly growth in administrative spending, in explaining rising costs on college campuses. Schools have chosen, not been forced, to spend more. And what they have chosen to spend money on is the administrative superstructure, not the education of students.

Educational finance is important, but it is not the whole story. The expansion of administration has also distorted and perverted higher education. To professors, the purpose of the university is teaching and research. Everything else is ancillary and judged by its contribution to the institution’s true purpose. Administrators, however, have a perverse vision of ends and means. To them, the purpose of teaching and research, along with student services, is to bring customers into the store. To them, courses are interchangeable, the learning kitchen no less important than calculus. To them, the humanities are completely dispensable, never mind that a student without a liberal arts education is completely false. Students do benefit from literacy skills—that which is at the heart of what we do.

Administrators have disempowered the faculty and wrecked the university.

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**Schools have chosen, not been forced, to spend more. And what they have chosen to spend money on is the administrative superstructure, not the education of students.**

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AFTER FINISHING LIBRARY SCHOOL, I was hired to work in a for-profit college library. The year and a half that I worked there proved to me that the institution’s library, like most other resources, seemed to exist for only two reasons: meeting baseline accreditation standards and drawing in more customers. As a result, our skills, which we had honed at the graduate and professional levels, were treated as part of a commodity rather than a vocation. Decisions about the library were made by corporate offices on the other side of the country, and we struggled to gain even the most basic resources, such as staples and printer paper. In order to meet the accreditation standards that allowed this company to provide financial aid, the company provided the minimal number of required resources in the form of online databases. However, the library catalog and databases were kept in a closely monitored interior portal that couldn’t be accessed off campus. The same resources were offered at every campus in the company regardless of what programs were offered there.

Although these conditions are an affront to the field of librarianship and a disservice to students, the bottom line is this: It didn’t matter. Providing information literacy skills is central to librarianship, particularly media and digital literacy, but this institution’s success depended on students not having those skills, not being able to find such prominent information about higher education from simple Google searches. What I learned about information literacy has guided me as I’ve moved on to more traditional colleges that uphold the value of strong 21st-century literacy skills, and I’m not dismissive of my experience in a for-profit college library. However, it should be clear to educators who approach these institutions that their success relies on our failure to create independent, literate thinkers—that which is at the heart of what we do.

Heather Wilson is now the Systems and Emerging Technologies Librarian at Ferrum College in southern Virginia, although much of her research is focused on the state of libraries in for-profit colleges.
WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, the contemporary debate about higher education is mired in polemics. Depending on one’s ideological position, college is either failing at everything or should fail more spectacularly for less money. It can seem as though there are two clearly delineated positions at play, but what remains fairly constant on all sides is an implicit agreement that the conversation is about “real” college.

Real college would be traditional, not-for-profit colleges that have, at least in principle, a public-good mission to serve students and the civic body. Real college is dead, long live real college. In narrowing our debate to the form, function and survival of real college, we exclude the implicit other: “not real” college.

The “not real” colleges are the expensive, unprestigious, marginalized colleges that operate for profit. From big names like University of Phoenix to small regional “business” schools like Brookstone College in the Southeast, when we are debating about higher education we are rarely talking about all of higher education. That’s a problem for many reasons.

For one, it excludes more than 2 million students and tens of thousands of teachers and administrators. But it also blinds us to a brutal reality: Every efficiency proposal to “fix” traditional higher education already exists in for-profit colleges. From centralized curriculum control, no tenure system and no faculty governance, to unbundled services and student-customer models, the efficiencies of market-based proprietary higher education are the logical end of a postsecondary race to the bottom.

Exacerbating inequality

Let’s begin with people close to the center of the institution: faculty and staff. I give about a dozen academic lectures on for-profit higher education a year. Those talks are usually based on my research of how organiza-

Ironically for us, marketing and advertising captures the attention of both prospective students and prospective employees. ... For-profit colleges are hiring the Ph.D.s traditional colleges produce but don’t employ.
tional practices at for-profit colleges exacerbate existing inequalities.

Two years ago when I would give that talk, I would get a handful of questions during Q-and-A. But the real engagement happened after the formal talk. A small line of audience members would form, each angling to tell me a story about working in a for-profit college. Most of them were ABDs. They were experts in middle history, rare library collections, graphic art, culture and humanities. And they were broke and broken. In many cases, they had delayed graduation to get one more paper out to reviewers or to take one more turn on the academic job market.

These academics use the same Internet that potential students use. They see some of the millions of ads blanketing the Web. In 2012, the Apollo Group, the largest for-profit college company and owner of the University of Phoenix brand, spent $400,000 a day in Google ads alone. For-profit colleges made the “jobs and education” sector the fourth-highest industry advertising on the major search engine and e-commerce platform. And of that sector, the top five advertisers also happened to be the largest national for-profit college chains. Together, they spent more than $1.1 billion in online advertising with a single search engine in 2011 (Table 1).

### TABLE 1. Top Four Google Ad Buyers in “Jobs and Education” Sector in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For-profit College</th>
<th>2011 Google Ad Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Phoenix</td>
<td>$46.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITT Technical Institute</td>
<td>$19.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeVry University</td>
<td>$17.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capella University</td>
<td>$11.0 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Data drawn from 2011 fourth-quarter earnings report from Google and Adwords, analysis by WordStream.com

**Spending on marketing, not instruction**

In 2012, a congressional committee investigated the for-profit college sector. Among other things, the committee found that the leading companies it examined spent “$4.2 billion or 22.7 percent of all revenue on marketing, advertising, recruiting, and admissions staffing.” The No. 4 targeted search term for the sector’s Google ad placement? Unemployment benefits.

The connection between labor and the for-profit college sector’s bottom line is multifaceted. Billions of taxpayer dollars are being transferred from the federal financial aid programs, as student aid commodifies job insecurity and turns it into consumer demand. In turn, those dollars feed ad buys on Google.

Ironically for us, marketing and advertising captures the attention of both prospective students and prospective employees. For-profit colleges’ high profile also takes aim at higher education’s labor issues: For-profit colleges are hiring the Ph.D.s traditional colleges produce but don’t employ.

Fast-forward a couple of years, and the Q-and-A segments of my talks are more animated and more specific, but one thing remains the same: Those living the difference still wait until the end of my talks to tell me their stories. The stigma of working in a for-profit college is, for them, real. But so is paying the rent. And that’s where the tension lies.

A content analysis I conducted in 2011 of job ads in job databases specific to higher education institutions found an abundance from for-profit colleges. Just like traditional facility positions, most of these jobs require a terminal degree. By some metrics, fewer than 22 percent of all Ph.D. students will land a tenure-track job. That doesn’t mean they won’t have a doctoral degree, but it does mean that most of the Ph.D.s traditional higher education produces won’t work in the traditional professorate. Given the state of contracting full-time, tenure-track jobs in traditional higher education, for-profit colleges are tapping a pool of overqualified, underemployed labor.

**The price of scrapping governance**

Faculty governance is a cornerstone in the labor relationship in traditional higher education. Many decry tenure as outdated and inefficient. The efficiency logic for ending tenure is about saving time and money, and increasing student-customer satisfaction.

We are able to see the truth of that for ourselves. For-profit colleges have jettisoned faculty governance altogether. Tierney and Hentschke refer to the total absence of faculty autonomy in for-profit colleges in benign “business-ese”: Actors in for-profit colleges who are imbued with authority are more aligned with the interests of investors than are actors in traditional colleges, i.e., faculty. These different “incentives” can also be understood as polar opposite ideologies of professional identity and job role. Traditionally, faculty have been considered expert in some field of study. Governance, in part, was a way of preserving the role of expertise in curriculum and pedagogy. In for-profit colleges, curriculum is another market-tested deliverable. It is most often designed by a corporate-level office and handed down to deans who, in turn, charge faculty with efficient content delivery. Pedagogical decisions are centralized and bureaucratically controlled. And, deviation is rarely tolerated.

One former English teacher at a technology-centered for-profit college told me about his hiring process. After a series of online application steps, he was invited to a pre-faculty online training session. The training was paid but not a guarantee of regular employment. Not unlike the online classes he would be teaching, the course was taken with other pre-faculty candidates in an online forum.

The candidates read corporate policies on curriculum and pedagogy, and took a series of compliance quizzes. They also participated in online discussion groups with each
other but always with a corporate trainer serving as moderator. The aspiring English professor was also a critically trained humanist. In one online session, he says, he raised a concern about the absence of any critical literature that pertained to racism or sexism or inequality. As he recounts the story, the discussion group ground to a halt as the other faculty candidates waited for a social signal from the corporate moderator. The signal came soon enough: ‘The curriculum was to be taught as is, and students should not be forced to engage “controversial” material.

Are students doing better?

Has this abundance of credentialed labor, authoritarian models and technology adoption made for a better college? It may make for more routinized tasks. There are no service requirements or, I’m told, hours-long faculty debates about minutiae in for-profit colleges. But there may be discontent of which we will never hear. Many workers in for-profit colleges sign nondisclosure agreements as part of their employment and do not have a faculty governance mechanism with which to lodge formal complaints.

The real selling point of this efficiency, though, is that the most important actor is the student-consumer. As a liberation pedagogue, I would never argue with the primacy of students in an educational endeavor. But are students more satisfied when their faculty are content-delivery tools? The results are mixed.

For-profit students have reported high satisfaction with their “caring instructors,” even if, in the final analysis, they don’t think it outweighs the high tuition cost. Care matters, but care is not a function of efficiency. It is more likely a function of something else for-profit students like: small class sizes. For all students, intimate learning environments seem to matter, but they matter most for students like those who enroll in for-profits. They are more likely to be working, have significant gaps between formal schooling and have concerns about their academic preparation. Small classes and caring instruction benefit from sound funding and institutional security. Perversely, the lack of funding and institutional security are the two conditions being used to justify efficiency regimes in traditional higher education. The market-based enthusiasts either do not understand the future they are selling us, based on the very products they created, or they are not much interested in the flaws of their logic.

How ‘we’ are becoming ‘them’

For our part, traditional academics think there is a clear line of demarcation between “us” and “them,” “real” college and “fake” college. But this year, we have seen the University of Kansas system put the kibosh on academic freedom on social media. A growing handful of universities have decided that “trigger warnings” should be added to classes that deal with “racism, sexism or violence” (or what some of us call reality). And all manner of student-as-consumer movements have emerged. The line between “us” and “them” gets fuzzier all the time. And toeing the line out of a professional ethos also gets harder as the labor conditions producing our most heated debates contribute to the growth and legitimacy of for-profit colleges. Alienated graduate students and contingent labor would be right to consider one of dozens of ads from for-profit colleges when they discover prestige sandwiches are made of air.

Our collective refusal to engage the reality of for-profit higher education only accelerates our headlong rush to become the thing we critique. Every proposal for making over higher education in the image of its free-market gods already exists. We need not argue hypothetical ends to top-down bureaucracies, gutted faculty governance or market-tested curriculum. We know precisely what those realities look like. The only question left for us—after we admit that we are not all Harvard and Yale and Princeton—is: Do we want to be the more efficient University of Phoenix, Strayer or Everbest?

Endnotes


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LALAIN WILLIAM
Approaching for-profit teaching ‘like my pants are on fire’

MY GRADUATE DEGREES are from a for-profit university. I teach online, on campus, at for-profits and at nonprofits, so I’ve experienced all sides as a learner and instructor. I’m a hybrid. This spring, I am teaching 10 courses at four institutions.

What I’m noticing most about working at the for-profit is the micromanaging. It’s ultra-, ultra-, ultra-micromanaged. I have a course adviser overseeing me, and a semester moderator overseeing the adviser. I get emails if I don’t respond to introductory course posts within 24 hours—the engagement benchmark.

Courses are prepackaged, with in-house textbooks. Instructors may not make any curriculum changes. I received retraining because I was responding to student discussion boards using my own words. There is a list of prewritten answers to use when giving feedback, which gives the impression you’re making scholarly comments when all you’re doing is perusing a list provided to you. This makes students feel like they are getting deep, intensive individualized attention. You’re cautioned to keep track and not to use the same prompts within the same discussion. It’s smoke and mirrors.

Last year, two instructors evaluated my class, and a third instructor worked to redirect my noncompliance with the posting rules for student discussions. I was asked what I was willing to do to change. I sense that if they could automatize us and make us into grading computers, they would do it.

The pay started at $1,200—the lowest pay of all my institutions. I must fill out weekly time cards indicating lunch breaks. If I am away from my computer for more than 15 minutes, I have to justify it. I’m supposed to work less than 15 hours a week; however, I find it impossible to teach a course and actually read three- to eight-page papers from 40-plus students in that amount of time. I calculated how much time I would be spending on grading students’ work if I worked less than 15 hours a week and found that it was around three minutes per student. I figure I’m making $1.23 per hour. I approach the work like my pants are on fire.

Lalain Williams is an adjunct professor of psychology who teaches in New Jersey and the Philadelphia area.
The Education Racket: The rise of the higher education business and the fall of the faculty

BY BARMAK NASSIRIAN

Every great cause begins as a movement, becomes a business, and eventually degenerates into a racket. —Eric Hoffer

Higher education’s metamorphosis into a business began in the early 1980s, when a toxic combination of external factors—shrinking population of recent high school graduates, stagnating wages, and diminished state and federal support—conspired to disrupt the basic economics of how colleges and universities had operated in past. From its inception in the colonial era through the multiple phases of its democratic and democratizing expansions, and most particularly during its postwar golden age, higher education had been on a remarkably stable trajectory of ever-broadening access and ever-improving quality, made possible by generous external support from government, industry and philanthropy.

Minimal tuition-dependency explicitly framed the relationship between institutions and their students as noncommercial, conveying to students that they were beneficiaries of a cultural-scientific endeavor that promoted the advancement of learning, the betterment of mankind, as well as individual enlightenment and success. The external support that made the public-good financing of higher education possible was predicated on a thriving U.S. economy and an expanding middle class that enjoyed year-after-year real increases in wages and an improving standard of living.

The structural changes that afflicted the economy throughout the 1970s finally caught up with higher education by the decade’s end through changes in federal and state funding practices. State defunding of higher education—evident in the 30 percent drop in real state appropriations per full-time equivalent student from 1987 to 2012, and the 37 percent drop in state fiscal support per $1,000 of personal income over the same period1—began a cycle of escalating costs that saw inflation-adjusted public four-year tuition go up threefold (and public two-year tuition go up nearly 2.5 times) over that same period.2 And the federal role, previously limited to providing grant support for the neediest students, gradually turned into a much broader function of loan-financier for low- and middle-income families. The growing volume of educational debt filled the gaping abyss between escalating college costs and stagnating family incomes.

Students as customers

The new financing paradigm, which shifted responsibility for college costs to students and justified the act on the basis of future private benefits, was accompanied by conceptual and attitudinal changes that transformed students into customers, and institutions into vendors, in a market-driven transactional relationship with each other. The ensuing commodification of higher education reshaped colleges and universities, which tacitly embraced and validated the new paradigm by radically reorganizing their internal configuration, their spending priorities and their outward behavior.

Competing in a zero-sum game of relative prestige, and chasing after upper-income students whose college selection is heavily influenced by popular rankings, colleges began to shift budget priorities away from core academic functions to amenities,3 spent lavishly on student recruitment and marketing efforts, and increasingly subordinated admissions, programmatic and academic policies to strategic plans devised mainly by administrators.

These external changes were mirrored in and reinforced through corresponding internal changes in the workings of institutions. The rapid growth in the number and power of top administrators and professional staff, overreliance on underpaid adjuncts, the advent of student rankings of the faculty, and the gradual erosion of the faculty’s historical role as guardians of academic policy4 were important ingredients in the emergence of the new corporatized university.

Virtually all of these changes were—and still continue to be—justified in the name of improving institutional finances and increased accountability. That they paradoxi-
cally do the exact opposite is an inconvenient footnote to the panic-driven efforts of federal and state policymakers attempting to make sense of costs and outcomes in higher education.

Even beyond the underfunding and cost-shifting that set the privatization and corporatization of higher education in motion, federal and state higher education policies have further exacerbated it by treating higher education as a widget to be mass produced with as little cost—and fuss—as possible.

**The rise of legislative meddling**

Legislative meddling in and micromanagement of academic affairs is a fairly recent American phenomenon. In the first two decades of distributing financial aid under the Higher Education Act, for example, the U.S. Department of Education entirely deferred to institutional judgments on academic matters.

Beginning in the early 1990s, however, Congress and successive administrations, using the power of the purse, began to get more deeply involved in issues that were clearly academic in nature. The length of an academic term, definitions of satisfactory academic progress, the number of times aided students may retake some courses, and the definition of the credit hour are examples of topics on which the federal government now has issued mandatory policies.

Even more troubling are the series of previous and pending attempts—to thus far unsuccessful—to exert federal jurisdiction on such critical issues as transfer-credit evaluation and credit acceptance policies of institutions, their definition of full-time academic course loads, and their degree completion policies.

At the state level, public institutions have faced tremendous political pressures to homogenize their curricula, accept transfer credits almost regardless of quality and comparability, and compete for scarce resources on the basis of performance funding, which is often reduced to a mechanical proxy for graduation rates.

These policies, while well-intentioned attempts at improving outcomes and reducing costs, have strengthened the widget-production model of higher education and further tilted the playing field in favor of administrators by reducing the power of the faculty to design and oversee academic policy. Not only do federal and state funding practices and intrusive policies undermine the faculty directly, the overlay of ever-more demanding compliance requirements further weakens the faculty by increasing the number and the authority of administrative and professional staff who use regulatory compliance as the ultimate trump card in their encounters with faculty judgments about academic policy.

Market competition for students qua customers, over-the-top amenities spending, excessive and often artless regulations, and administrative bloat are not only net cost drivers, they are also crowding out the core function of universities, i.e., teaching and research by the faculty. But their damage to higher education far transcends mere cost inflation.

The gradual reduction in the ranks of tenured faculty, the evisceration of shared governance in the name of professional management, and the loss of faculty sovereignty on academic policy together undermine academic integrity and the very substance of higher education. The widget-production model of higher education maintains an astonishing position of agnosticism on the central question of academic quality.

The widget-production model of higher education maintains an astonishing position of agnosticism on the central question of academic quality.

**Misinterpreting the facts**

As commonsensically intuitive as the importance of allowing the faculty to define the ethereal substance of higher education might be, policymakers and their allies in higher education appear intent on following the path they have charted to the bitter end. As sketched out above, any reasonable assessment of American higher education would recognize that public skepticism about outcomes and accountability is directly linked and linkable to erosion of federal and state support and to the fall of the faculty.

Policymakers, however, presumably looking at the same facts, are increasingly drawing conclusions that suggest the exact opposite by further shifting costs to students, and further disempowering the faculty. Congress, for example, is toying with the idea of allowing the states to establish graduate-level equivalencies for non-university issued—i.e., politically decided—credentials for teachers and principals. And the hottest policy innovation in the Washington echo chamber, offered up as a panacea for all the

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THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT of 2001 established a test-based system of accountability focused on K-12 districts, schools and teachers. As we enter the second decade of the NCLB era, the spotlight has widened to include teacher preparation programs. Teachers have long been identified as the most important in-school factor in student achievement; it is unsurprising that questions of how to improve teacher quality have begun to drive talk on education policy.

Calls to strengthen and hold programs accountable come from voices both within and beyond the profession—including the AFT, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Reports such as those issued by the National Council on Teacher Quality disparage all but a handful of university-based programs. Among state and federal elected officials and policymakers, impatience with the status quo has driven many to advocate forms of accountability that are simplistic in design, hasty in implementation, and counterproductive to existing efforts to improve teacher quality.

Proposed reforms supported both in Congress and the executive branch focus on outcomes, link funding to performance and create competition. The suggestions are strikingly similar to K-12 accountability systems. Standardized test scores figure prominently, and there is a strong press to assess the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs based on the value-added scores of their graduates. These proposals also aim to shift funding to nonuniversity educator-preparation providers in order to open up the field to competition, a rationale similar to that underlying the charter school movement.

The push for accountability in teacher preparation comes at a time when the U.S. education system faces profound challenges. While relative wealth remains a predictor of achievement around the world, the United States reports a particularly acute wealth and achievement gap. Struggling schools, those that have suffered most from the wealth and
achievement gap, are more likely to be staffed by inexperienced teachers. Among all schools, the “greening” of the teacher workforce is a growing problem: The modal number of years of experience for teachers has shifted from 15 to one in just more than two decades. Another, related challenge is increasing system “churn,” constant teacher turnover that cycles experienced teachers out of the profession, negatively affects school cultures, and increases costs for already cash-strapped school systems.

**Challenge and opportunity for teacher preparation**

And so, teacher preparation is at a crossroads. Even as school systems face increasing challenges, many policymakers continue to rely upon old and ineffective methods of evaluating teachers and their students. When districts and states depend on test scores and value-added measures alone, they ignore substantive concerns about methodology and reliability, and overlook the inability of value-added estimates to provide insight into why things are working or not. The promotion of new educator-preparation providers raises significant questions about the effects of separating the teaching profession from its intellectual base, and of enervating the profession with programs that provide curtailed training and the suggestion of a short career.

The K-12 accountability movement has exacerbated rather than solved education’s systemic issues. Schools at the bottom of the wealth and achievement gap struggle to meet the demands of test-based accountability, creating a pedagogical gap to go along with the others. These same demands constrain innovation in teaching and reduce teachers’ motivation. They situate blame for systemic failures on individual teachers, and thus reinforce the already low levels of respect and compensation endemic to the teaching profession. When teachers seek professional growth and advancement, they confront the absence of real career paths within the profession.

Yet there is opportunity here. With unprece-dented attention being directed toward teacher preparation, there is room—and urgent need—for proactive solutions that will enhance the profession of teaching and positively affect student learning. Solutions from the field must address the issues identified above. They must put forth real reforms to answer critics of teacher preparation. They must hold teacher preparation to account without resorting to simple test-based accountability. They must maintain education as an academic and a practical field. And they must tackle the problems created by inequality in the schools, the greening of the teacher workforce, and teacher churn.

**Partnerships for learning**

When confronting all of these challenges simultaneously, the fate of teacher preparation is intertwined with the fortunes of K-12 schools, educators and students. Proactive reform must directly address both teacher preparation and teaching practice. Schools must become sites of ongoing learning and growth, not only for students, but also for the adults who teach in them. University-based programs are uniquely positioned to advance this goal by developing partnerships with K-12 schools.

An illustration of the transformative potential of these partnerships comes from ongoing work at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of Education and Human Development. Peabody is partnering with principals and teacher leaders to design field experiences that enable teacher candidates to learn through practice. Rather than simply dropping in to the school community, candidates work there over the course of the year, side by side with experienced mentor teachers and other novices. As candidates learn, they in turn act as mentors and tutors for preK-12 students, and as increasingly able assistants for master teachers. And master teachers develop and refine new skills as they support the development of novices.

Benefits also accrue to the schools and the students who attend them. Increasing the ratio of adults to children in a classroom allows for more personalized attention and differentiated instruction so that all students have access to rigorous curricula. Teacher candidates and clinical faculty offer not just extra pairs of hands, but also access to expertise and resources for school innovation. By matching candidates’ needs for real-world experience with schools’ needs for skilled and

(Continued on page 17)
RIDING THE MOMENTUM of a rising student, faculty and community movement, the AFT launched its national effort to reclaim the promise of higher education during the annual AFT National Education Issues Conference in Baltimore, April 9-11. More than 300 AFT members, leaders and experts in higher education, students, and community partners attended the conference and were inspired by multiple calls to action.

“Higher education should be about expanding opportunities for middle- and working-class families, not a ‘debt sentence,’ and not a way for Wall Street and for-profit colleges to profit off of students and families,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten.

Weingarten launched the national effort in a speech and town hall meeting. She stressed the need to unite to ensure rigorous instruction that is student-centered and faculty-driven, while supporting independent and innovative research; to make college affordable and accessible to all and relieve the burdens of those costs that have been shifted onto students and families; to foster diverse institutions that provide a richer educational environment for all students; and to ensure students are taught and mentored by faculty and staff who are well-prepared, professionally supported and have a voice in academic decisions.

“An accessible, affordable and high-quality system of public higher education is critical to the health of our nation—both to ensure that students reach their fullest potential, and to enable the United States to continue to develop as a just society, a vibrant democracy and an engine of economic opportunity,” said Weingarten.

Countering a dire message
AFT Vice President Sandra Schroeder, who is chair of the AFT’s Higher Education program and policy council and former president of AFT Washington, invoked our union’s rich history of activism in welcoming members to the meeting. “We need to be able to renew our energy because the threats are huge,” she said. “What we’ve had in this country is an education system that is the envy of the world, built on a compact between the government and its people. If we don’t reclaim the promise of that compact, we may see higher education become more of a private privilege than a public right.”

Higher ed workers get it, said Jared Bernstein, senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and former senior economic adviser to Vice President Joe Biden. He was the evening keynote speaker, addressing jobs, higher education and the economy.

What has happened in higher education, with the increasing reliance on a contingent workforce—nontenure-track, adjunct faculty—mirrors the slow growth in the rest of the economy, Bernstein pointed out. Wall Street has rebounded from the recession of more than five years ago; American families have not. Yet public policy has failed to pursue a full employment economy, and it’s hurting everyone—workers, families sending kids to college, recent college graduates—the more than 90 percent of the population who have seen its household income decline. Rep. Paul Ryan’s Orwellian budget, where cuts to Pell Grants come under a heading of “Ex-
panding Opportunity,” is an example of the high-level disconnect. Those not hurt: the financial industry and the wealthiest Americans, who worry about inflation. “This is a class issue,” he said. “Inflation is a threat to your assets. Unemployment is a threat to your paycheck.”

He called upon the educators in the room, who grasp both the roots and the significance of economic inequality and social immobility, to do more to raise the alarm in their communities—“to wake the sleeping dog” of inequity.

Make college free

Another major speaker was Sara Goldrick-Rab, associate professor of educational policy studies and sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who delivered the Irwin Polishook Lecture. Her topic was college affordability and the inadequacy of current public financial aid programs to provide opportunity and success for a large, voiceless portion of the college-going public.

“Students find financial aid inaccessible, unreliable, untrustworthy, volatile, presumptuous (the expected family contribu-
tion) and punitive,” she said. There is a perception that aid is not linked to academic performance, which is not true. “Political support for aid is diminishing. It is portrayed as the new ‘welfare,’ treated as unearned, and the students who need it cast as undeserving. They use pictures to depict students who receive aid as black and brown, when the majority are white.”

Goldrick-Rab previewed a proposal, which she formally unveiled a few days later, to make the first two years of college free for all students by more fairly distributing available dollars. “The best way to fight fear is hope,” she said. Hope would come from a system that puts students, teachers and families together fighting for the end goal of a free college education.

“This is a class issue: Inflation is a threat to your assets. Unemployment is a threat to your paycheck.”

—JARED BERNSTEIN, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Maintain faculty control

The very notion of free college or higher education as a public good would be heresy to the profiteers behind massive open online courses (MOOCs), for-profit education, and some technology, courseware and publishing companies, pointed out a panel discussing “Tech 2.0—Higher Education in the Age of MOOCs.”

“Their M.O. is consistent,” said Susan Meisenthal, former president of the California Faculty Association and a member of the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education. “They address real problems, like affordability and access, but always, somebody somewhere is planning to make a ton of money off whatever they’re touting as the latest solution for higher education.” Educators have to reclaim the high ground and be part of the negotiations.

Community college expert Shanna Smith Jaggers, of Columbia University, urged faculty to fight the forces of “efficiency” that seek to unbundle education services and reduce the quality of our graduates. For a few dollars more per student, real educators can maintain coherence and retain more students who complete degrees that hold greater value.

Another session that electrified the room was “Getting Wall Street Off Our Campuses,” moderated by Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress at the City University of New York and an AFT vice president. Speakers talked about the almost unprecedented flow of capital from institutions serving a public good into the pockets of predatory profiteers. For example, pre-
senter Charlie Eaton, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Berkeley, showed the cost of the capital fueling the $535 billion enterprise that was U.S. higher education in 2012. The financing costs of student loans ($33 billion), institutional borrowing ($11 billion) and the profits taken by for-profit colleges ($1 billion) tacked on an additional $2,861 per student in 2012.

In other sessions, participants gave feedback to Jamie Studley, acting undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Education, on the federal proposal to link a college rating system to funding. They learned about ongoing student-faculty-community activism around student debt, elevating the role of professional staff, building bridges between K-12 and higher education, and organizing to fight politicized accreditation decisions that threaten access for large swaths of the population. And they boned up on developments related to the Affordable Care Act, teacher preparation, and new strategies to strengthen the voice and organizing success of contingent faculty.

“Together we can reclaim the promise of higher education as a means to opportunity and success,” Weingarten said.

—BARTBARA MCKENNA
FIRST CONTRACT RATIFIED IN CHICAGO
Tenure-track and nontenure-track faculty at the University of Illinois at Chicago have ratified a first contract that came after the faculty held a two-day strike in February and threatened another one for April.
Faculty at UIC are represented by UIC United Faculty, a joint affiliate of the AFT, the Illinois Federation of Teachers and the American Association of University Professors. It consists of two bargaining units—of 725 tenure-track and 425 nontenure-track faculty.

The contract, which applies retroactively for two years and extends through August 2015, increases faculty compensation, including a new minimum lecturer salary of $37,500. Previously, a lecturer with a Ph.D. who teaches a required writing course for all incoming freshmen earned only $30,000 a year. The contract also provides stability through a system of promotions for these lecturers. “We formed this union to give UIC faculty a collective voice and the protections we need to advocate for our school, our students and our members,” says Joseph Persky, president of UIC United Faculty. “This agreement helps us do just that.”

SUPREME COURT DECISION A SETBACK FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
The U.S. Supreme Court’s April 22 ruling in Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, upholding a constitutional amendment in Michigan banning preferential treatment based on race, gender, ethnicity or national origin, strikes a troubling blow for the nation’s commitment to equal opportunity for all students, AFT President Randi Weingarten says.

“This decision has made it clear that equal treatment trumps equal opportunity, and it gives states the ability to write affirmative action out of their law books,” she says. “This ruling, taken with the Supreme Court’s evisceration of the Voting Rights Act, takes us backward on racial equality. We agree with Justice Sotomayor that ‘this refusal to accept the stark reality that race matters is regrettable.’”

WHITE HOUSE RELEASES PLAN TO RATE TEACHER ED PROGRAMS
The Obama administration has asked the U.S. Department of Education to enact a plan to evaluate teacher training programs by how well the students in new teachers’ classrooms do on tests. So far, the plan is getting a D from educators who worry that test-driven education policy is no substitute for a systemic approach to preparing teachers and a higher exit threshold to ensure that every teacher is ready to teach on his or her first day in the classroom. These were the recommendations of the AFT Teacher Preparation Task Force’s “Raising the Bar” report.

We don’t need “a quick-fix, test-and-punish, market-based ranking of programs, but real solution-driven change that will support programs in preparing confident and competent teachers,” says AFT President Randi Weingarten.

SUNY HOSPITALS ARE SAFEGUARDED IN NY BUDGET
New York legislators heeded the call of the community in Brooklyn, N.Y., and excluded from the state budget a pilot measure that would have opened the door to privatizing the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center and two other hospitals in the SUNY system.

“Allowing the private sector into public hospitals would have endangered the continuation of health services that save lives but that are often not offered at for-profit hospitals,” says Frederick Kowal, president of the United University Professions at SUNY and an AFT vice president. Two AFT affiliates, the United University Professions and the New York State Public Employees Federation, represent workers at SUNY Downstate. The budget also has the first increases in state support for SUNY campuses since 2008.

Mobilizing for equity and high-quality services
All during May, the AFT, joined by its affiliates and community partners, is stepping up action to reclaim the promise of high-quality higher education, public services, public schools and healthcare. From a May Day workers’ march and rally in Montpelier, Vt., to a declaration of support for fair pay for contingent faculty in New York, to an AFT Washington-sponsored community Solidarity Day in Seattle, to a justice rally at the U.S. Supreme Court to mark the 60th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, AFT members and locals are focusing on the urgent need to restore equity to national, state and local policies that allow all to dream their dreams and achieve them. Members will join with allies to reclaim the promise and push forward solutions that are right for our communities and for the future of our country. Learn more at www.aft.org/promise.
Building the profession  
(Continued from page 13)

caring adults to work with learners, we can improve and expand the resources available to schools, particularly those in need. Peabody’s approach to accountability is robust and productive. At Peabody, licensure candidates in early childhood, elementary, secondary and music education must pass the edTPA, a national, externally scored, performance-based measure of candidates’ abilities to plan, enact, and assess teaching and learning of rigorous content. Such performance assessments of teaching, administered before candidates take over their own classrooms, are meant to act much like the practical component of the board examination for physicians. Unlike value-added scores, they measure candidate performance upfront.

Peabody surveys employers and graduates—one, three and five years out—about candidates’ abilities, from differentiating instruction for diverse learners to creating safe and productive learning environments. These offer another external check on program effectiveness. So do graduates’ ratings by their administrators on state-approved observation protocols. Following the lead of states and partner schools, Peabody is now experimenting with student perception surveys, as recent studies reveal a potential correlation between students’ perceptions of support and challenge, and their level of achievement.

This collection of measures, combined with benchmark assessments as candidates progress through course- and fieldwork, provide faculty with invaluable data to support program development. When woven into the fabric of school-university partnerships, shared attention to these kinds of measures establishes joint accountability for the quality of teaching. And this direct, in-your-face accountability is a powerful impetus for innovation and improvement, one which answers critics of teacher education while still respecting the complexity of the profession of teaching. Most importantly, this approach to accountability focuses on building structures to support better teaching rather than measuring scores and waiting for better outcomes to emerge.

Next steps for teacher preparation and teaching

School-university partnerships of the sort described here hold great promise. Yet, a focus on such partnerships requires attention to other needed changes, not only in teacher preparation, but in teaching. In order for these partnerships to flourish, we must move beyond rigid, egg-crate models of schooling in which individual teachers work in isolation in their classrooms. This could mean reconfiguring school schedules and teachers’ assignments to allow teachers to work and learn as teams, led by master teachers, grounded by established teachers and assisted by novices. Capitalizing on the expertise of each member, such teams can strengthen capacity to respond nimbly to evidence of student progress. Another necessary shift will be developing new staffing compensation arrangements such that both mentors and prospective teachers are paid for their efforts. We must find ways to make high-quality preparation and professional learning affordable, and as teachers take on new roles, differentiated pay structures must be developed to recognize differentiated responsibilities.

Additionally, as programs ratchet up candidates’ engagement in practice, and work with schools to reorganize for student and teacher learning, we ought not back off from attention to theory and research: These provide the foundation for teachers to make sense of their students’ learning, to plan sound next steps, and to respond to the unpredictable. The ability of universities to build and support this theoretical and empirical foundation is part of what makes universities so important in this enterprise.

The deep challenges facing U.S. public education will not be solved through school-university partnerships alone, but neither will they be solved by saddling teacher preparation programs with NCLB-style accountability systems. Teacher preparation leaders can take important steps now to push the education system in the direction of systemic solutions, while at the same time addressing calls for reform and accountability. Positioning teacher preparation in relation to a broader project of building school capacity to serve learners well is a critical next move. By matching up resources and needs, and by disrupting conventional roles and work arrangements, we can increase the chances that more students have the opportunity and resources to learn, and that their teachers have the commitment, knowledge, skills and staying power to enable their success. By committing to such an agenda, teacher preparation programs reclaim their role as the driving force to improve teacher quality and thereby education for all students.

The education racket  
(Continued from page 11)

ills of higher education by the think tanks, is competency-based credentialing, which essentially does away with the teaching function of the university (and therefore dispenses with the faculty) in favor of educational technology and self-paced learning.6

The chaotic policies that have brought higher education to its current state of disarray do provide an opening for pushback against the status quo. First and foremost, these policies have in many ways exhausted their own financing mechanism. With aggregate outstanding educational debt now exceeding $1.2 trillion, the debt-financing trend of the last 30 years is simply unsustainable. The nation faces two options as to how it will provide for higher education. One choice would eliminate teaching and simply direct students to learn on their own and take machine-graded tests. The other would promote a more Spartan, less overregulated and overmanaged faculty-governed option focused on educational needs of students. While it may be difficult to figure out which way things will go in the near future, what clearly hangs in the balance is whether higher education will degenerate into an outright racket, or whether it will return to its idealistic origins as a cause.

Endnotes

1. Data provided by the State Higher Education Executive Officers and the National Association of State Budget Officers.
4. There is no finer treatment of this topic than Benjamin Ginsberg’s The Full of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrator University and Why It Matters (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
5. On staffing patterns, for example, a recent Delta Cost Project issue brief found that the average number of faculty and staff per administrator declined by roughly 40 percent at most four-year institutions. Donna M. Desrochers and Rita Kirkstein, Labor Intensive or Labor Expensive? Changing Staffing and Compensation Patterns in Higher Education (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2014).
6. Clearly, competency-based learning is appropriate for some students in some courses. But the hype among millennials, who offer it up as the solution to faster, cheaper credentials, betrays a profound misunderstanding of education and the importance of teaching. This hype also reflects an undercurrent of cynicism in suggesting it is sufficient for needy students, who are least likely to be able to navigate learning without the supervision and handholding of caring and competent teachers.