Three Ideas for Broad-Access Higher Education

A report on the conference, "Mapping Broad-Access Higher Education"
Stanford University, 1-2 December 2011

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It is essential for higher education leaders, researchers, and policy makers to cooperate to support the nation's broad-access colleges under very challenging fiscal circumstances. Our project is charged with facilitating the growth of shared knowledge to nurture the effectiveness of these institutions, whose guiding mission of college accessibility is a worthy point of national pride.

On 1-2 December 2011 our effort reached its second milestone with a conference at Stanford University titled "Mapping Broad-Access Higher Education." The specific goals of the conference were:

- to present detailed empirical pictures of current governance structures, market dynamics, and career trajectories (of students, instructors, and administrators) in the access sector, and use those pictures to suggest tractable program and policy recommendations in the short term.

- to specify more precisely what empirical research on broad-access governance, market dynamics, and careers is necessary to inform improved organizational performance in the short, middle, and long term.

- to specify investments required in data collection, basic research, student training, and professional mentoring if a policy-relevant social science of access higher education is to be sustained into the future.

In the service of these goals we commissioned eleven papers from researchers, policy makers, and entrepreneurs on a wide range of topics including faculty labor markets, higher education finance, performance incentives, and student outcome measurement.[1] These papers served as the starting points for conference discussions, which were organized in four sessions: conceptualization of the broad-access sector; careers in broad-access schools; incentives and measurement in broad-access schools; and policy implications.[2] The convening generated rich

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[1] See Appendix B for paper titles and abstracts. For conference participants, many of the commissions are available online at http://cepa.stanford.edu/ecology/conference-papers (password protected)

[2] Appendix C contains the conference schedule; Appendix E contains a list of conference participants

discussion and a sense of optimism despite the large challenges currently facing schools in the broad-access sector.

One purpose of this report is to synthesize the convening's varied exchanges as a catalyst and encouragement for colleagues to carry this important conversation forward. Much of that synthesis is in Appendix D. A second purpose is to specify priorities for our own work for the duration of this project's three-year term. These priorities have grown organically from our now countless exchanges with scores of researchers, broad-access college leaders, foundation officers, and higher education entrepreneurs. We summarize our priorities as three ideas that we believe have great promise for encouraging creative destruction and cumulative improvement in how broad-access higher education is understood, assessed, managed, and experienced.

Idea 1:   Pay explicit attention to the organizational aspects of broad-access higher education.

This idea has been an organizing theme of our project since its inception. The commissioned papers and subsequent conference discussions made clear just how fruitful an organizational approach to the study of broad-access higher education can be. Specifically, we are learning that organizational approaches to this sector help us to understand:

How the intramural organization of broad-access colleges shapes student outcomes. Papers by James Rosenbaum and Janet Rosenbaum and Peter Riley Bahr summarized a now impressive body of research on the extent to which the internal organization of broad-access schools helps explain sluggish persistence and high college-leaving rates. Whether and when students receive informed academic guidance; the extent to which schools pay sustained attention to individual students' progress; the presentation of curricular options and academic

choice points: all of these aspects of higher education's supply side are crucial determinants of student success.

How important it is to study populations of schools. US higher education is a complicated organizational system, comprised of thousands of schools variably oriented towards local, regional, national, and transnational clienteles. Economists have long led the way in operationalizing US higher education as an inter-organizational system, yet most of their work has focused on the market exigencies of schools seeking prestige in national and transnational markets. Broad-access schools, especially public and non-profit ones, compete for students and prestige regionally and probably have different value propositions (e.g., providing college access, contributing to regional economic development, and building local civic capacity). Commissioned work by Sarah Turner and Jessica Howell sketched the current dearth of knowledge about broad-access markets and suggested how new research on this part of US higher education might be fruitfully pursued. Relatedly, while much has worry has been expended on the steadily rising cost of college, most national discussions have focused on summary statistics of average costs. Commissioned work by Jane Wellman demonstrates wide organizational variation in delivery costs and the nonlinear relationship between cost and organizational productivity.

How ought researchers and policy-makers conceive of the tremendous organizational variety in broad-access higher education? There is a growing consensus that inherited organizational typologies, such as the Carnegie classification system, are no longer sufficient for understanding the wide diversity of organizational form, service mission, and target clientele within the broad-access sector. Research commissioned for this project provided several novel ways of defining, disaggregating, and re-aggregating this organizational space. Jorge Klor de

Alva's essay described important distinctions between public and private non-profit colleges and for-profit ones, including resource flows, student characteristics, and performance incentives. Such work is especially important given how little scholarly attention has been paid to for-profit schools in the past, and how large a role these schools now play in higher education provision. Brian Prescott's paper drew attention to deficiencies in current schemes that fail to fully utilize information on student populations, educational delivery (e.g., online versus classroom), and non-credit awarding activities when arriving at school classification typologies. The essay by Martin Reuf and Manish Nag called attention to the very nature of typology construction: should typologies be inductive or deductive in nature? The authors demonstrated that inductively generated typologies are particularly useful when attempting to describe new organizational forms. As higher education is undergoing tremendous change, inductive typologies have the benefit of not being encumbered by biases and priorities of earlier policy eras.

We also believe there is much more to be known about how various kinds of colleges fit into their regional economies. Thus our project team is eager examine the contribution of broad-access schools to the development of Silicon Valley in the San Francisco Bay area. Much is known about the contribution of entrepreneurs, business firms, venture capitalists and research universities to the emergence of this vibrant research and production system, but we know little about the role of state universities and community colleges that have provided much of the human capital required to initiate and sustain this collective enterprise. We envision a study employing qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate when and how connections were made by varying types of broad-access colleges over a 40-year period (1970-2010) to specific firms, contributions of these schools to the training of the broader labor force, and how college-industry connections may have contributed to the transformation of the colleges themselves. This

study would provide a template for researchers to follow in studying connections between colleges in other regions of the US to the local economies in which they operate.

How little we know about the recruitment, enhancement, and retention of human capital in broad-access schools. The paper by Susanna Loeb, Agustina Paglayan and Eric Taylor made startlingly clear just how much we need to know in the aggregate about human capital in broad-access higher education. In contrast with a strong body of evidence produced by public and labor economists studying the K-12 workforce in recent years, scholars and policymakers have very little systematic knowledge about the origins and career trajectories of faculty and administrators in the broad-access sector. Developing such knowledge should be a major priority for funded research on the broad-access sector. We cannot reasonably hope to help to improve organizational performance in broad-access schools without knowing who broad-access personnel are, how they are trained, how the most ambitious faculty and administrators plot their careers, and how broad-access schools incent improved performance.

Idea 2:   Re-imagine the relationship between college and life course.

Higher education has been the primary vehicle for upward mobility in American society for several generations. Guided by social scientists and ambitious philanthropies, the US state and federal governments funded an array of programs and institutions that made college attendance an attainable dream for millions of Americans in the decades following World War II. This historically unprecedented expansion of higher education changed the character of US higher education and the composition of the college-going population. The experience of college became much more diverse. Some students lived on residential campuses while others lived at home and drove to college, or attended part-time while working elsewhere or raising families.

Some students enrolled in college directly after high school, while others entered (or re-entered) college after years of parenting or paid employment. Despite this great variety, the notions of "traditional-age students" (i.e., 18-22 year-olds) on "traditional" (i.e., residential) campuses have retained a powerful ideological force. Regina Deil-Amen's commissioned paper for our conference made this point very persuasively.

Traditional is not an empirical description but a normative standard against which other kinds of students and colleges are easily viewed as unappealing aberrations. Higher education researchers' use of this term has not been ill-intended. Enabling one's children to attend college full time, right after high school, has long been a mark of adult prosperity, and the lifelong benefits that accrue to young people who complete four-year college degrees are indisputable. Calling this version of college "traditional" has often gone hand in hand with advocating for its provision to as many American young people as possible. Yet however well intended, the dream of four full-time years on residential college campuses to every 18 year old is not a realizable one at present, if ever it was.

It may not even be a good idea. Many thoughtful observers are becoming newly suspicious of the purported benefits of full-time residential colleges for all young people. They point to the pervasive party culture on American college campuses; huge investments in intercollegiate sports; modest or non-existent yearly learning gains; majors catering to teenage tastes rather than labor market realities; high and rising rates of school leaving; and sometimes crushing debt from student loans. The chronic fiscal crisis in public higher education provides an additional, and ultimately inarguable, incentive for a radical redefinition of the ideal relationship between college and the life course.

One discussion at the conference focused on the extent to which college serves as a rite of passage, marking a period of independence from parents as teenagers transition to adulthood. While this "rite of passage" view may be accurate for some, it does not capture the experience of most young adults. Many have experienced other rites of passage: household formation, marriage, or parenthood for example. And for a great many young people who do go to college, the experience is not clearly demarcated from the rest of youth; they continue to reside at home with their families and may play large parts in their household economies.

A related discussion explored variation in the network structure of young adulthood and how deeply social networks and college type are interrelated. Full-time students on residential campuses participate in elaborate, age-segregated social worlds, often removed from the scrutiny of parents (who are nevertheless paying much of the bill). Students on non-residential campuses are probably much more likely to have routine obligations to family members (parents, siblings, spouses, or their own children) and to be in workplaces alongside others from a wider spectrum of age and life experience. Full-time students on residential campuses rarely have to send money home to help families pay rent or support siblings, but for most other college students, social support flows both directions. For this majority, colleges that assume "traditional" students may not be viable option, and efforts to increasingly "virtualize" the classroom demonstrate that schools are taking notice.

With these issues in mind (and well-informed by the generative commissioned essay by Richard Settersten) several questions arose out of conference discussions:

- At what pace should students complete college?
- Is rapid completion always a good thing?

- What criteria, other than academic ones, demonstrate that a student is "ready" for college? Should finances, developmental maturity, life stage, or life experience be part of assessing college readiness?

These questions have large implications. They suggest that current idealizations of "the college experience" are discordant with the life circumstance of many—probably most—college students. They raise big ethical questions, since a great deal of social science demonstrates that finishing college at a young age brings large material returns over the life course. Who should be entitled to enjoy these benefits, on what basis, at what stage in their lives? Who should pay the bill? We believe that such normative questions need to be raised simultaneously with new research programs describing the complex, varied, and probably changing relationships between college and the life course in contemporary America.

Idea 3:   Build research capacity and useful new knowledge through institutional partnerships.

In an epoch of chronic resource scarcity at most levels of government, demonstrating organizational value has become a newly pressing obligation for college leaders. The accountability revolution has come to higher education, but just what will colleges be accountable for, to whom, and with what consequences? Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa's commissioned paper, and the discussion it provoked, has emboldened our belief that college leaders should work proactively with policy makers to craft serious accountability mechanisms that serve to improve organizational productivity while also preserving US higher education's rich tradition of self-governance. Over hundreds of years, institutional autonomy has enabled our colleges and universities to develop a rich diversity of missions, identities, specialties, patrons, and alumni. The quality and accessibility of US higher education are envied worldwide.

We believe that this simultaneity of self-governance, excellence, and access is no mere coincidence.

Academic self-governance should be honored, but it also must be remade to accommodate hard fiscal realities and increasing public expectations that broad-access schools be scrupulous stewards of the resources entrusted to them. Our third idea offers a new way of configuring institutional and academic research to get better, more consistent, and more actionable information about college quality by recognizing the expertise and wisdom of those who deliver broad-access higher education. There was great excitement about this idea, put forth in the final hours of the convening: develop partnerships between broad-access schools and research universities for sharing data, analytic expertise, and local knowledge.

Chronic financial troubles mean that broad-access colleges and state higher education agencies often lack resources to carry out any research beyond what is required for standing compliance protocols, which unfortunately offer scant insight about organizational effectiveness. Colleges often have a great deal of data but lack the capacity to aggregate and integrate it in meaningful ways. At the same time education researchers often have difficulty negotiating access to quality data on broad-access schools. At present, data access is often predicated on coincidental personal relationships and subject to many local contingencies. Developing mutual trust between researchers and schools can be a challenge in an increasingly politicized accountability environment.

Several conference participants suggested the development of consortia linking policy research training programs with broad-access schools to produce research for mutual benefit. Graduate programs of education policy might house fellowships for broad-access institutional researchers to enhance their analytic skills. Broad-access schools could host graduate-student

interns; routinized sharing of data, expertise, and institutional know-how would add value for all partners.

Over time and through the well-tested mechanisms of competitive research funding and peer review, such research-and-training consortia could generate new professional standards for data collection and analysis appropriate for the entire broad-access sector. With their resources and reputations, large philanthropies and government agencies could play pivotal roles in the development of these standards by selectively funding consortia among the best education policy programs and the most ambitious broad-access schools.

An important benefit of such partnerships would be the generation of large amounts of new data—a vital draw for top academic researchers who require quantitative materials of high quality in order to conduct their academic work. A major obstacle to academic researchers studying broad-access higher education is limited data availability. Data-sharing partnerships might go far eliminating this obstacle, while also making more efficient use us data systems and institutional research capacity that are already in place in broad-access schools.

Additionally, partnerships would do much to develop shared knowledge and shared professional identity among policy analysts based in universities and academic professionals in broad-access schools. Broad-access schools perform multiple functions and answer to a wide array of stakeholders, and they often are exquisitely complex organizations. Broad-access administrators hold a great deal of wisdom and local knowledge about their schools. Policy makers and policy researchers would benefit from this knowledge and, in turn, administrators would benefit from better-informed research and policy.

Partnerships could be used to develop research programs investigating the most important policy questions in broad-access higher education today. For example:

How do students and broad-access schools find each other? The conference's Thursday evening discussion centered on how information about colleges, and the availability and variety of degree programs, shapes how students make decisions about whether and where to go to college and whether to remain enrolled. What information is most relevant to students and their families in broad-access college choices? Conference participants noted that the extensive economics literature on college choice is oriented almost exclusively toward academically selective schools and simply may not be relevant for the broad-access sector. Is broad-access college choice based upon the availability of particular programs, the general reputation of schools, or more fundamental considerations such as distance from home or work? Questions also emerged regarding where students get information about broad-access schools. Do they use websites that aggregate data on school characteristics? Or do they rely more heavily on peer networks, advertising, and spatial proximity? Beyond the issue of information availability were issues relating to its content and the timing of its delivery. While participants agreed that families must have accurate and relevant information about college costs, degree completion rates, and labor market returns, there was little consensus about what the essential information is and when or how it should be delivered to maximize its benefit. Shared knowledge about the character of student selection processes at present might enable administrators, researchers, and policy makers to clarify and simplify the mechanisms through which students learn about college options and sort themselves into schools.

How do students move through broad-access schools? How best can they be helped to complete college? The connection between the structure of degree programs and student persistence was also discussed. A notable feature of elite colleges and universities is the wide array of choices students have in shaping their educations. Particularly at liberal arts colleges,

students are encouraged to explore multiple interests before deciding on a major. Conference attendees were critical of the application of this educational model in the broad-access sector. Some suggested that students might benefit from fewer, more structured curricular options to increase persistence and reduce time to degree—yet the extent to which this notion might mean a categorical tiering of opportunity for different kinds of students did not go unmentioned. Additionally, participants stressed the need to have strong student services support for to help students navigate paths completion. The importance of student services in increasing persistence and completion was seen as being particularly relevant as many schools are currently cutting these services in response to budgetary constraints. Shared understandings about the kinds of choices broad-access schools should make available, and about the kinds of support services that are essential for student success, might enable administrators, researchers, and policy makers to create industry standards, best practices, and common expectations that would improve overall college quality.

Where do broad-access faculty and administrators come from? How can the best ones be identified and rewarded? Conference participants concurred that a great deal more should be learned about what happens inside broad-access classrooms and what successful teaching techniques are for the population of students broad-access colleges serve. Leaders from broad-access institutions pointed out that personnel in particular schools know a lot about what happens inside their classrooms, but that this information usually is not systematically collected and consolidated in ways that enable comparison and improvement across classrooms, faculty, programs, and institutions.

Similar questions were raised about how labor markets for broad-access faculty and administrators are probably radically different than from what is known about labor markets in

admissions-selective institutions. Again, administrators at these schools often understand these processes well, but this information has not yet been collected in ways that allow for the characterization and study of the sector as a whole. Shared understandings about how to assess faculty/administrator performance, and shared knowledge about faculty/administrator labor markets, might enable the crafting of policies which systematically reward high performers and discourage weak performance.

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In recent years it has been easy to feel discouraged about the future of US colleges and universities. But we are optimistic. The number and diversity of people engaged in research aiming to improve the sector, the enthusiasm about new research relationships, the growth of novel theoretical frameworks, and the possibility of rich new data sources warrant optimism. The themes gleaned from the conference clearly demonstrate that we have fewer answers than questions, but they also suggest that even a small amount of strategically designed research could transform the way policy makers understand the sector and offer them bold new ways for improving it. By rethinking the role of college in the life course and seriously attempting to understand the inner working of schools, we can improve broad-access higher education, fitting it better to accountability imperatives, labor market realities, and students' real lives.

APPENDIX A
CONFERENCE RATIONALE

Mapping Broad-Access Higher Education
Stanford University 1-2 December 2011

The funding, assessment, delivery, and governance of US higher education all are undergoing profound change, even transformation. Especially implicated are the vast majority of institutions enrolling most or all of those students who seek to enter them: broad-access schools. Social scientists must pay serious attention to broad-access schools if they wish to participate in the most consequential public and policy debates in US higher education going forward.

Our project is purposed with informing changes in incentive systems to encourage student persistence and completion in broad-access schools. This is a significant challenge, because the *current* incentive systems governing this sector are poorly understood. At present analysts are without the systematic data and theoretical frameworks required to develop empirically rigorous comparative research on existing and potential organizational incentives in broad-access higher education. A strong foundation of basic research is essential for valid policy recommendations as broad-access higher education continues to evolve. Our ambition is to coalesce the necessary philanthropic, government, and academic, and intellectual resources to build this foundation.

Our project reached its first major milestone in early 2011, with the production of a research report outlining what a policy-relevant, performance-oriented social science of broad-access higher education might look like. That report, the product of several commissioned papers and a strategy session held at Stanford in 2010, called for the development of empirical research on the organization of *governance systems, markets, learning,* and *careers* (of students, instructors, and administrators) in the broad-access sector.

The conference to convene at Stanford in December 2011 represents our project's second major milestone. Informed by newly commissioned research and scholarly analysis, the conference has three goals:

(1) To present detailed empirical pictures of *current* governance structures, market dynamics, and career trajectories (of students, instructors, and administrators) in the broad-access sector, and use those pictures to suggest tractable program and policy recommendations in the short term.

(2) To specify more precisely what empirical research on broad-access governance, market dynamics, and careers is necessary to inform improved organizational performance in the short, middle, and long term.

(3) To specify investments required in data collection, basic research, student training, and professional mentoring if a policy-relevant social science of broad-access higher education is to be sustained into the future.

In pursuit of these goals we have enlisted the help of some of the most ambitious researchers, policy makers, and entrepreneurs in US higher education to help us develop new ways of describing, assessing, and intervening in the extraordinarily complicated ecology of this sector. Building on their commissioned work, and lessons learned from an earlier convening, in December 2011 we plan to target discussion toward building national research capacity in the following domains:

I. Governance

How are broad-access colleges and universities ruled and regulated? Many administrators and educational entrepreneurs bemoan the regulatory complexity of the higher education sector. Yet to our knowledge the web of rules regarding accreditation, access to public funding streams, union and professional association compliance, and federal/state/regional statutes impinging on the work of broad-access schools has never been fully described – much less reformed. Because regulatory compliance is such a massive part of the work of colleges and universities and largely defines the landscape of incentives in this sector, a clear rendering of the regulatory environment of broad-access schools is essential.

Policy implications: Though enhanced understanding of this complicated governance web, we will derive policy recommendations to improve and simplify regulation in this sector. With sound empirical knowledge base, we can address such questions as:

-- *What do educators and entrepreneurs in this sector see as major barriers to positive innovation and change?*
-- *How might the web of governance be simplified to encourage innovation and incent improved student persistence and completion?*
-- *Should we build different kinds of incentives for different parts of the sector, or even for different parts of single schools?*
-- *Should any parts of the system be completely deregulated or eliminated to improve overall student outcomes?*

II. Markets

Admissions-selective colleges and universities operate in national and even transnational markets for students, research funds, personnel, and prestige. A great deal of educational economics has described the dynamics of such markets. Yet economists know comparatively little about the local and regional markets in which broad-access schools compete. A robust, empirically sound understanding of these local and regional markets is essential for anyone interested in changing the landscape of incentives in which broad-access schools do their work.

Policy implications: With a sound empirical knowledge base on local/regional markets, we can address such questions as:

-- *What market incentives seem to advance or inhibit student progress and completion?*
-- *Do more competitive markets improve persistence and completion?*

-- Are private and/or for-profit schools more strongly incented than public schools to maintain high rates of progress and completion?
-- What market configurations seem to encourage community colleges to pay more attention to student progress, persistence, and completion?

III.   Careers

As the number and character of higher education providers changes and the population of college attendees continues to grow and diversify, the notions of "traditional" educational trajectories must be retired from the lexicon of educational social science. In its place we need explicit recognition, description, and comparison of variable educational careers, and sober discussion of how multiple college pathways might be celebrated, supported, and assessed.

And just as the notions of "traditional" students must be retired, so too must the idea of a "traditional" career as a faculty member or college administrator. The broad-access sector is widely diverse and very dynamic. Just how faculty and administrative careers will be defined and rewarded in this changing ecology is a large and largely open question. As was learned through two decades of K-12 reform, researchers and policy makers cannot ignore the professional cultures and personal ambitions of college personnel if they wish to design systems that will reward and retain top talent. At present however we know virtually nothing about the career trajectories, pay scales, regulations, and prestige systems that define the labor markets for teachers and administrators in broad-access schools.

Policy implications: We seek to build research that will accommodate the changing variety of educational pathways. We seek also to inform and craft policy that will encourage the recruitment and retention of quality instructors and administrators in the broad-access sector. With better empirical knowledge of student, faculty, and administrator careers, we can address such questions as:

-- What configurations of support services are optimal for different kinds of students?
-- Should fees and financial aid packages vary by age and household configuration of students? Should we create financial incentives for college at younger, or older, ages?
-- Should community colleges limit or encourage program changes at different stages in the student career?
-- What is the shape of labor markets for educators and administrators in the broad-access sector? How is the expansion of the for-profit sector changing these labor markets?
-- How are these labor markets like those for high school teachers and principals? How are they like markets for elite college faculty and administrators?
-- What do career trajectories in broad-access teaching and administration look like?
-- How might we encourage, value, and reward quality long-term employment in this sector?

APPENDIX B
PAPER COMMISSIONS

Papers available at http://cepa.stanford.edu/ecology/conference-papers (password protected)

Classifying Organizational Forms in the Field of Higher Education
      Martin Ruef, Princeton University
      Manish Nag, Princeton University

Financial Characteristics of Broad-access Public Institutions
      Jane Wellman, Delta Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity, and Accountability

Thinking Anew About Institutional Taxonomies
      Brian Prescott, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)

Markets Matter: Broad-access Institutions and Post-Secondary Attainment
      Jessica Howell, The College Board
      Sarah Turner, University of Virginia

The "Bigger Box" for Mapping Broad-Access Higher Education: The Radically Altered Landscape of Early Adulthood
      Richard A. Settersten, Jr., Oregon State University

The "Traditional" College Student: A Smaller and Smaller Minority and Its Implications for Diversity and Access Institutions
      Regina Deil-Amen, University of Arizona

Shaping College Success and Career Trajectories: Reconceiving College Procedures
      James E. Rosenbaum, Northwestern University
      Janet Rosenbaum, University of Maryland

Research Directions for Understanding Human Resources in Broad-Access Higher Education Institutions
      Susanna Loeb, Stanford University
      Agustina Paglayan, Stanford University
      Eric Taylor, Stanford University

A Case for Deconstructive Research on Community College Students and Their Outcomes
      Peter Riley Bahr, University of Michigan

Measuring College Performance
      Richard Arum, New York University
      Josipa Roksa, University of Virginia

Incentives, Results and Research Needs: The For-Profit Sector
      Jorge Klor de Alva, Nexus Research and Policy Center

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Thursday 1 December: Westin Hotel

3:30PM - 4:00PM   Registration

4:00PM - 4:30 PM   Welcome: Claude Steele
Conference overview: Mitchell Stevens & Mike Kirst

4:30PM - 6:00PM   Session 1: Conceptualizing the Broad-Access Sector

papers: David Longanecker & colleagues; Martin Ruef and Manish Nag; Sarah Turner and Jessica Howell; Jane Wellman

commentators: Bridget Terry Long and Robert Zemsky

moderator: Tom Ehrlich

6:00PM - 6:30PM   Break, wine and refreshments

6:30PM - 8:30PM   Dinner/presentation: Pilot Study: Broad-access schools in Silicon Valley—Kristopher Proctor and Rachel Baker

moderator: Dick Scott

Friday 2 December: Arrillaga Alumni Center

8:15AM   Shuttle departs Westin Hotel for Arrillaga Alumni Center

8:15AM - 9:00AM   Continental breakfast

9:00AM – 10.30AM   Session 2: Careers

papers: Richard Settersten; Regina Deil-Amen; Susanna Loeb; Jim Rosenbaum; Peter Riley Bahr

commentators: Tom Bailey and Sue Dynarski

moderator: Mitchell Stevens

11:00AM – 11:30AM coffee break

11:30AM – 12:30PM Session 3: Incentives and Measurement

papers: Jorge Klor de Alva; Richard Arum & Josipa Roksa

commentators: Ann Person and Michael McPherson

moderator: Eric Bettinger

12:30PM – 2:00PM   Working lunches: Building Capacity

group 1: data systems
group 2: training—mentoring and recruiting
group 3: research infrastructure

2:00PM – 3:00 PM   Reflections on policy implications of papers and previous discussions

presenters: Joni Finney, Linda Thor, Ralph Wolff

moderator: Mike Kirst

3:00PM – 3:30PM   coffee break

3:30PM – 5:00PM   Research Policy Implications

facilitators: Mitchell Stevens & Mike Kirst

5:00PM   Adjourn

APPENDIX D:
SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Session 1: Conceptualizing the Broad-Access Sector

This session had its roots in the discussion of four papers: *Classifying Organizational Forms in the Field of Higher Education* by Martin Ruef and Manish Nag, Princeton University; *Financial Characteristics of Broad-Access Public Institutions* by Jane Wellman, Delta Cost Project; *Thinking Anew about Institutional Taxonomies* by Brian Prescott, WICHE; and *Markets Matter: Broad-Access Institutions and Post-Secondary Attainment* by Jessica Howell, The College Board, and Sarah Turner, University of Virginia. The discussants were Bridget Terry Long, Harvard University and Bob Zemsky, University of Pennsylvania. The conversation focused on three main areas: classification of broad-access schools, measuring colleges' productivity and the role of information in the careers of broad-access students.

The conversation opened with a broad discussion of college taxonomies. The idea that current systems (namely the Carnegie Classification) are outdated and less helpful for this diverse and changing sector seemed to be widely shared, though it was also mentioned that classification has been immensely helpful to research in the past. Many conference participants suggested ideas on how a change in the classification system could move forward: any new system should be simple, a vehicle of information reduction, cognizant of the language it employs, and engaged with the end purpose. This idea that taxonomies should be created with a specific purpose in mind gained traction in the conversation; many agreed that taxonomies should be flexible enough to meet the needs of researchers. A question regarding the unit of analysis was also raised—should we be classifying schools or programs?

Another topic of discussion was how to measure school productivity. Much of the conversation focused on what a difficult task this is. The production function of college is complicated and not well understood: inputs and outputs intermingle, we have weak measures of quality, and there are methodological and analytical problems with separating production costs of instruction. Additionally, the models that have traditionally been used don't necessarily fit this type of school. The idea that we should push back against a uni-dimensional notion of college output was raised, as was the opinion that outcomes vary tremendously between programs and departments at the same school.

The last major strand of conversation focused on the role of information in the careers of broad-access students with particular regard to how they gather and interpret information about the schools in which they consider enrolling. There was no consensus among participants regarding the efficacy of information dissemination. Some speakers questioned whether information makes a difference. They wondered if students can identify what kind of information they want, know what to do with information they are given, and can effectively sort through an overwhelming storm of facts. Other participants argued against this portrait of the "feckless consumer" that acts without regard for the available data: there is evidence that students are savvy consumers and have clear knowledge of what they need. The problem, some stated, is that there are barriers to information—many current information delivery systems were not created with students in mind. Examples of where information delivery systems are quite effective (financial offices of for-profit schools, for example) and where researchers have found positive effects from careful information dissemination (studies in behavioral economics, for example) were shared. In terms of the kinds of information that should be shared, participants mentioned that procedural knowledge is important, as are better indicators of affordability and quality.

Session 2: Careers

The discussion during this session was motivated by papers by Richard Settersten, Oregon State University (*The "Bigger Box" for Mapping Broad-Access Higher Education: The Radically Altered Landscape of Early Adulthood*); Regina Deil-Amen, University of Arizona (*The "Traditional" College Student: A Smaller and Smaller Minority and Its Implication for Diversity and Access Institutions*); Susanna Loeb, Agustina Paglayan and Eric Taylor, Stanford University (*Research Directions for Understanding Human Resources in Broad-Access Higher Education Institutions*); James Rosenbaum, Northwestern University and Janet Rosenbaum, University of Maryland (*Shaping College Success and Career Trajectories: Reconceiving College Procedures*) and Peter Bahr, University of Michigan (*A Case for Deconstructive Research on Community College Students and Their Outcomes*) and the prompts of the two commentators: Tom Bailey and Sue Dynarski. The papers were loosely centered around the ideas of "careers" in higher education and the conversation focused on two main topics: the changing role of college in the life course, and learning and teaching at broad-access schools.

Many conference attendees contributed to the discussion around the evolving role of postsecondary education in the life course. The idea was raised that there is a mismatch between for whom schools are designed and who actually attends them. Many broad-access schools follow the model set by more selective schools; a model of choice and freedom designed to promote individual exploration. Students at broad-access schools do not necessarily have the structure in place to take advantage of this supported growth. Common threads in the discussion centered around responding to the messiness of actual life by emphasizing limited pathways, quicker successes, connections with employment, and guardrails in the architecture of broad-

access schools. The discussion also raised some basic questions about the structure of post-secondary education in the broad-access sector: do we want to encourage students to move through quickly? Where does college stand in the ever scrambling life course? Do we still want to promote universal access? What does increased access mean for other pathways?

Another major topic of discussion during this session was teaching and learning in higher education and how incentives at different levels affect this most basic focus of schools. While much of the discussion centered on practical, micro-level (classroom) concerns, some higher level questions arose: Is college about learning? Do we need college professors? Do and should students study? Many participants agreed that the incentives faculty face don't always align with student learning. Many faculty are incented primarily to do research and receive little training or support for good teaching. While many participants felt that there was not enough usable data or research on good teaching and learning, a few areas of hopeful research were mentioned: the impact and importance of graduate student teaching and new knowledge about learning coming through studies on developmental education. The need for quality research that genuinely interacts with higher education was echoed many times, and discussions about data arose again.

Session 3: Incentives and Measurement

The discussions of the session papers by Jorge Klor De Alva (*Measuring College Performance*) and Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (*Incentives, Results and Research Needs: The For-Profit Sector*), with comments made by Ann Person and Michael McPherson, raised questions about higher education as a public good and how we measure whether those public goods are doing what they are supposed to. Part of the problem is that it is difficult to determine what we should measure in order to know that higher education is doing its job. It is also unclear at what level

(course, program, institution, etc.) success should be measured and judged. Other questions were raised about whether and how to hold institutions accountable for their performance. Concerns here ranged from whether there was political motivation to hold higher education accountable to how changing the incentives for one part of the system might affect other parts of the higher education system. What are the unintended consequences of high stakes measures? Do we expect all schools to perform at the same level?

It was argued that institutions should be more student-centered, that this works in for-profit institutions. Others argued that the incentives that keep students in school sometimes encourage students and faculty to work less rather than more. Making students happy does not necessarily lead to positive long-term results.

Another branch of conversation considered students as consumers and whether it would be feasible to provide some sort of warranty for college. Some colleges guarantee jobs. Some participants argued that institutions that are in touch with the local labor markets are held accountable by those markets.

Participants also wondered if measuring something, even if imperfectly was better than nothing—IPEDS may have bad graduation measures, but they're better than nothing and have started important conversations about better measures.

Working Lunches: Building Capacity

Working lunches were held to discuss issues pertaining to the study of the broad-access sector of higher education. These lunches were organized around three themes: (1) data systems; (2) training, mentoring, and recruiting; and (3) research infrastructure.

Group 1: Data Systems

This group focused discussion on data systems, both real and imagined, that support the research of issues relat4ed to broad-access institutions. The lunch conversation started with the participants listing the higher education data sources they were aware of—the list was fairly extensive. Conversation then moved on to discussing how researchers can go about obtaining data, particularly when certain data is housed within larger bureaucracies. The value of "back scratching" was discussed—both in terms of answering questions and data access. Participants also noted that researchers have a tendency to get siloed in certain data sets, but that there are non-education sources of education data (health, PSID, etc.). They also noted that the creation of new data sets can be difficult and time consuming.

Conversation then turned to brainstorming of what ideal data on the broad-access sector would look like. Participants wanted more information about non-monetary measures and outcomes, as well as information about what goes on in the classroom. Also, existing data usually contains populations of students at broad-access schools that are too small to effectively study. In general, there needs to be more focus in the data on students rather than institutions. The point was also made that qualitative data can make the use of quantitative data much richer.

On a more pragmatic note, the discussion also turned to wondering what we could do if data collection stopped today—a lot of what people wish for is never going to happen so what can we learn with what we already have? How many student observations do we need to make policy-relevant claims? 100? 100,000? This brought up the value of local consortia such as the one studying Chicago schools, which has value because it is tied to place. This would be much harder to do in higher education.

The final points of the conversation referred to how much data are already out there, just not necessarily all organized in one place. With many states putting together longitudinal state data systems there is about to be even more data available, but the challenge then will be whether people know enough to do good analysis. "Econometric back-flips"—as one participant described them—are not always necessary; sometimes the analyses schools need/want done can just be simple point and click summaries.

Group 2: Training, Mentoring, and Recruiting

This group was charged with discussing the issue of broad-access research capacity—namely how to recruit, mentor and train future researchers. The group agreed on two things: there is a lack of quality research on the sector (particularly on broad-access four-year schools) and new talent, the ranks of whom might not have personal experience with this sector, needs to be recruited to start thinking about how to frame new questions. The mechanisms responsible for this relative dearth of research, and potential remedies to address it, were up for discussion.

The group first discussed a basic question: how to bring more graduate students into this field. The ease of this task was not agreed upon; is there a general resistance to studying broad-access schools? Do graduate students want to study these schools and are they encouraged to do so? At what schools should students be recruited and from what areas of study?

Many participants felt that another fruitful avenue for research development is partnerships between researchers at R1 schools and researchers at broad-access schools. They felt that this could ameliorate some of the problems discussed previously at the conference (e.g., access to data or the legitimacy of research done by a researcher at an elite school about broad-

access school). But the viability of this option was debated, namely with respect to the research capacity of broad-access schools.

This led to a discussion of the labor markets and career paths at broad-access schools. There was some disagreement as to how faculty arrive at broad-access schools: Do they want to be there (because they have a commitment to equity or this matches their teaching interests)? Or are they sorted there against their will (due to a competitive job market)? Are there people for whom a faculty position at a broad-access four-year school is a career goal, or do people only aspire to research schools, liberal arts colleges and community colleges? To that end, are faculty ending up in an environment where they are not rewarded for what they were trained to do (research)? And is there the potential for research growth at broad-access schools? Do faculty at these schools currently have the luxury of conducting research or would that entail a change in the incentive structure?

Group 3: Research Infrastructure

This group discussed how research infrastructure might be built to enhance the ability of researchers and policy makers to study and evaluate the broad-access sector. The group agreed that challenges existed surrounding the absence of a coalition of stakeholders interested in collecting data and unified data systems that allow for evaluations and comparisons.

Several barriers were seen as inhibiting the ability of stakeholders to form a coalition aimed at effectively researching and governing broad-access schools. One issue was that potential stakeholders, particularly those located within postsecondary schools, had different incentive structures and available resources. Those working in broad-access schools, such as community college faculty, have invaluable ground-level knowledge; however, it is difficult for

them to engage in internal or external collaborative research because broad-access schools often lack mechanisms, such as class buy-outs, that would allow them more time for research. Broad-access schools also might lack administrative support for research activity. Collaborative efforts between research and broad-access schools were seen as potentially being difficult as it could easily look like research schools were trying to profit off of broad-access schools by carrying out research on them. To mitigate these potential problems, the groups discussed the possibility of forming a commission that would be comprised of multiple stakeholders to research and evaluate broad-access schools. This commission could potentially be funded by various foundations and organized at the state-level.

Several challenges were also discussed in terms of data availability for research and policy evaluation. The group discussed how current data systems were underutilized or fragmented in ways that prevented meaningful research. It also discussed the need for better data in particular areas (such as finance) and the need to arrive at a better description of the broad-access sector that could influence data collection efforts.

Session 4: Reflections on Policy Implications of Papers and Previous Discussions

In this session Linda Thor, Ralph Wolfe, and Joni Finney and Laura Perna presented on the policy implications of the conference papers and previous discussions. Several themes were present that related to the nature of broad-access schools, the need for better institutional research within them, and how to better influence the policies governing them.

Several issues emerged surrounding the nature of the broad-access sector. The sector was seen as providing college access for all students, emphasizing learning (both vocational and liberal arts), and being incredibly diverse. It was seen as being different from research

universities in that it had no research purpose, was far less funded, and generally did not conform to traditional images of higher education institutions. Resource scarcity within the sector was seen as driving all decisions, particularly those relating to cutting student services and curricular offerings.

It was also noted that many pernicious assumptions surrounding the sector exist. Views that broad-access faculty were not incentivized to teach and facilitate learning were dispelled; it was noted that teaching was the primary task of faculty in this sector. If anything, disincentives exist for individuals to take on positions of leadership because leadership roles have high turnover and faculty positions are more secure. Claims that broad-access schools pack students into large lecture halls were also dispelled—at least in regard to community colleges. It was observed that most community colleges simply do not have the building facilities to hold large lecture classes. The diversity of the sector was also used to caution against broad claims, such as statements that learning communities do not work.

One view of the broad-access sector that was seen as being accurate was that schools in the sector often lack the resources for institutional research. In the absence of spare resources, broad-access schools often have few resources to go beyond institutional research requirements that are tied to reporting, accountability, or accreditation requirements. With accreditation reporting requirements increasing over the next several years, schools will increasingly be responsible for providing more nuanced information on graduation and retention rates, as well as undergraduate proficiencies. Despite these additional reporting requirements, broad-access schools still have few resources for grant writing and research.

Several issues were also discussed regarding policy and the broad-access sector. First, the issue of governance was discussed, particularly in regard to the "Measuring Up" study. This

study provides state grades for higher education and found that those states that had state-wide goals, a strategic plan, some kind of K-12 program, accountability mechanisms, and a history of pilot programs tended to received higher grades. Second, the issue was raised as to how involve practitioners more in policy. This entailed issues pertaining to arousing the interest of practitioners, as well as how to effectively communicate with them. Major funders, presidents, professional associations, impactful keynote presentations, compelling articles or books, and executive summaries were seen as attracting the interest of practitioners. To communicate effectively with practitioners, it was noted that messages should smaller, to the point, and omit discussions of things irrelevant to them (e.g., discussions of universities or schools outside of their sector). Messages also should not contain invalid assumptions.

Session 5: Research Policy Implications

The concluding discussion began with a call to be optimistic about what faces broad-access colleges as the "college for all" storyline ends. There are increasing pressures forcing us to revise what college is and what it should be, and it is a great time for creativity and ingenuity.

Even though American high education is changing a lot, policy discussions have not yet turned to address this. This may not be a problem as part of the solution to the pressures facing higher education may be found in K-12 schools—implementing Common Core Standards could go a long way toward fixing many of the problems colleges face in terms to student preparation. The question was then raised as to whether there could be a postsecondary analog to the Common Core. Some people believed that there were common standards developing in higher education, particularly in vocational programs such as business, nursing, engineering, etc., but the question remained whether this could be translated or linked to the disciplines.

There was some worry about upcoming Congressional action on HEA reauthorization. Higher education funding is in jeopardy and the reauthorization may change the way financial aid and accreditation are linked. The challenge is that policy decisions are regularly made based on impression and anecdote rather than research

In keeping with the call for optimism, the point was made that higher education is performing higher than ever with a more diverse and larger population of students attending college. Financing this has been a problem—the growth in tuition is unsustainable—but in general there are reasons to be optimistic. There are lots of curricular reforms occurring and faculty are paying attention to what is happening in the classroom, it's just a matter of getting the right data into the right people's hands.

The day concluded with summary reports from the lunchtime working groups.

APPENDIX E
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