

## Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

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Duderstadt, J.J. (2000). *A University for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Pages: 358. Price: \$47.50 USD (cloth).

Reviewed by Glen A. Jones, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/  
University of Toronto.

Enough books have been written by American university presidents to constitute a distinct genre within the American higher education literature. These books are seldom written with the objective of contributing to higher education scholarship. They frequently take the form of personal reflections of the president's term in office, or the author's attempt to take a step back from the presidency in order to comment on the state of American higher education.

James Duderstadt's recent book falls into the latter category. A former president of the University of Michigan, Duderstadt describes what he believes to be the central issues and challenges facing American universities in this new century. By "university" he means the American research university, a term he believes can be accurately assigned to only 60 (or roughly half the number that are generally counted as research universities under the Carnegie Classification system) of the over 3600 institutions of higher education in the United States. These elite research institutions are, according to Duderstadt, the cornerstone of American higher education and the emergence of this institutional form has played a central role in America's economic development. He is both a staunch defender of these elite institutions and a harsh critic, in fact the core of

the book is a comprehensive review of critical issues and concerns organized into fourteen chapters.

The book is both a stimulating and frustrating read. It is stimulating because Duderstadt questions many of the core assumptions that underscore the status quo in American higher education within thematic chapters that focus on issues as wide ranging as teaching and curriculum, through finance, technology, and governance. Each chapter raises thoughtful and often insightful questions concerning contemporary arrangements, and presents possible alternative approaches.

In the chapter entitled "Service to Society," Duderstadt argues that service activities should be extensions of the teaching, research, and professional work of faculty, but he raises important questions about some "public service" activities that are becoming increasingly isolated from the core teaching and research activities of the institution. He is extremely critical of the American university's role in the provision of health care which he views as a major, and increasingly risky, business venture that detracts from the institution's more central interest in medical education. He argues that intercollegiate athletics have come under the control of the entertainment industry and that "the university is not only unable to control this culture, it is all too frequently co-opted and distorted by it" (p. 140). In both cases he asks why the university should be involved in activities that frequently warp, rather than complement or extend out from, its research and teaching goals.

His chapter on "Diversity" is particularly interesting, in part because Duderstadt briefly shifts away from the "objective" voice and provides a more personal account of the development of equity policies at the University of Michigan. He is a strong advocate of affirmative action and he describes the various initiatives associated with the "Michigan Mandate" designed to further diversity objectives at this large public institution. This is a refreshing discussion of the important role of institutional leadership in equity issues — not as top-down policy-makers, but as leaders who can constantly reinforce the importance of diversity as an institutional objective, support and encourage innovative initiatives that will further this objective, and provide public space for what can often become complex and challenging community conversations.

I found the book frustrating because of Duderstadt's americentric perspective and his frequent failure to explore issues in enough depth to move beyond the facile and into the murky waters of conflicting arguments and evidence. He begins with the assumption that the American higher education system is the best in the world and the American research university has made a significant contribution to that nation's dominant role in the emerging global, knowledge economy. Duderstadt may write about globalization, but his thinking is remarkably local. Except for a few very brief references, including an acknowledgement of the innovative activities of the British Open University, the author never moves beyond the boundaries of the continental United States. His discussion of mergers and partnerships between institutions always assumes that new relationships will emerge within American higher education, rather than between institutions in different nations. He seems to assume that if American higher education is the best in the world, then American institutions can learn little from other jurisdictions. This parochial approach sometimes leads to errors of fact and missed opportunities to explore issues in greater depth. He assumes, for example, that lay-member governing boards are a uniquely American creation, a conclusion that would come as a surprise to many other nations. He argues that the United States should consider an innovative approach to tuition fees and student loans where students could defer payment until they enter the job market and repay according to their income, but seems unaware of the fact that these mechanisms are already in place in a growing number of jurisdictions in different forms, including Australia, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. He presents interesting proposals for modifying doctoral-level graduate education, but does not acknowledge that at least some of these proposals have already been tried in the United States and other countries.

In attempting to provide a comprehensive overview of issues, he frequently sacrifices depth for breadth. He argues that an oversupply of Ph.D.s is a major issue for the future of graduate education, but his entire argument seems to be based on a single supply and demand study conducted in the life sciences (and there is little acknowledgement of the increasingly international, academic job market). His discussion of institutional governance focuses on the increasing politicization of

American university governing boards and the importance of finding the “right” governors, but he never steps back to consider the need for a new governance arrangement for the new university he believes will emerge in the 21st century. Why shouldn’t faculty and students be represented on American research university governing boards?

While I obviously have serious concerns with Duderstadt’s failure to deal with any of these issues in depth, I came to appreciate this book because of the challenging questions that it raises. It is best viewed as an attempt by an obviously articulate, intelligent higher education leader to inform an American audience about a wide range of very serious issues confronting the American research university, but the book could have had much more impact if Duderstadt had gone a step further towards engaging the reader in some of the very complex issues that he only superficially explores.



Government of Australia, Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee. (2001). *Universities in Crisis: Report into the Capacity of Public Universities to meet Australia’s Higher Education Needs*. Pages: 440. Price: \$35.00 AUD (paperback).

Reviewed by Robert Pike, Queen’s University.

Imagine a federal Senate committee report entitled, “Universities in Crisis,” which contains a copy of a letter sent by the minister responsible for higher education to the president of the committee of the most senior university administrators in the country blaming him for claiming that there is a crisis; and then going on to prove, to his own satisfaction, that no crisis exists. This is followed by a reply from the president which, after giving a long list of reasons why a crisis does exist, says that the country’s best universities are not among the top 75 in the world, and probably not the top one hundred. Such are two documents appended to this Australian Senate report, and in order to make much sense of them,