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## HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM 3.0

*Adding Value to States and Institutions*

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### ABSTRACT

Multi-campus higher education systems in the U.S. developed during the 20th century. They began as a way for states to oversee their several public colleges and universities. By the middle of the last century, they started to develop prominent roles as coordinators, regulators, and allocators. However, the structures and roles of the past are not necessarily the best way to contend with current demands and environmental constraints on public higher education. Some systems have begun to explore ways to steer their constituent campuses to advance the needs of their state and to identify new ways to support and serve the campuses—that is, add value to internal and external stakeholders. This concept of adding value is a core dimension of higher education system 3.0. This chapter provides a broad overview of the development and current status of multi-campus higher education systems, briefly examines the literature on the topic, and provides readers with an orientation to the structure of the volume.

In November 2012 a very unusual weather pattern formed off the east coast of the United States. Superstorm Sandy, a super-charged hurricane, traveled up the eastern seaboard, making a sudden turn inland around New York City, bringing high-powered winds, dramatic water surges, and significant amounts of rain. It proved to be one of the most destructive natural disasters in the region's history,

with estimates as high as \$42 billion in damages for New York State alone. The widespread damage caused by the storm proved that New York's physical and administrative infrastructure needed significant investment to better mitigate the impact of similar catastrophic events in the future.

In the following weeks, New York governor Andrew Cuomo created the NYS 2100 Commission to assess the resilience and strength of the state's infrastructure and identify ways to enhance that infrastructure to deal with natural disasters and other emergencies. The commission was co-chaired by the head of the Rockefeller Foundation, which provided financial and administrative support to the commission. However, despite the wide range of expertise brought by the varied commissioners and the Rockefeller Foundation, the governor's staff recognized that for any effort of this nature to have a meaningful impact, the engagement of cutting-edge scientists and researchers would be required. Identifying the right individuals was a daunting task, because a natural disaster such as Sandy crossed many areas of study, including engineering, environmental studies, energy, finance, insurance, and public policy.

To find these experts, the governor's office turned to its state university system. The State University of New York's (SUNY) vice chancellor of research worked with administrators at the constituent campuses<sup>1</sup> to identify experts across the system. Ultimately, they developed a team of experts of more than 20 scientists and researchers from five of the system's campuses. These experts worked collaboratively with the commission's subcommittees to provide information about cutting-edge research and helped to develop the recommendations that formed the final report that would guide New York's natural disaster preparedness.

The situation described here demonstrates the value that higher education systems can add to states, as well as to their constituent campuses and faculties. The state was in need of research-based expertise to help it devise a plan to secure the health, well-being, and prosperity of its citizens in the future. The state could have sent out a general call for assistance or reached out to one or two institutions in the hope that they could provide some assistance. However, those staffing the NYS 2100 Commission had limited time and knowledge, making it difficult for them to find the right people in the short time

they had. Thus, they reached out to SUNY, which was able to quickly mobilize faculty members from across the system to provide the required assistance.

From a campus and faculty perspective, there is also value in this scenario to being a part of the system. If no system existed, or had the state reached out to individual campuses on its own, it is likely that some members of the team would have still been identified to engage in the work of the commission. However, assistance from the system office likely created a stronger team of experts as it drew on expertise across the entire system. Thus, individual campuses and faculty members were given the opportunity to use their knowledge and resources in a way that could have significant real-world impact. The exercise proved successful enough that the team of experts began looking for ways to continue their collaboration beyond their work for the commission.

This enhanced collaboration, or *systemness* as SUNY chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher refers to it in chapter 2, is the key aspect of version 3.0 of higher education systems. That is, to be successful in the future, higher education systems need to move beyond their roles as allocators, coordinators, and regulators. They need to exert leadership in moving higher education institutions toward greater impact in their societies. They need to identify and pursue ways that add value to the states they serve and the campuses of which they are comprised. In moving toward systemness, higher education systems need to find ways to (1) promote the vibrancy of individual institutions by supporting their unique missions; (2) focus on smart growth by coordinating the work of campuses to improve access, control costs, and enhance productivity across the system; and (3) leverage the collective strengths of institutions to benefit the states and communities served by the system.

However, it is also important to be realistic about the environment in which systems exist. They face several challenges to harnessing systemness. Tensions often exist between “flagship” institutions and other colleges and universities within the system. Systems need to balance the needs of disparate institution types and geographically dispersed campuses. System governing boards are charged with protecting the interests of the state and ensuring the financial stability and academic quality of the institutions in their care. Sustained

reduction in public funding over the recent years has caused systems and their constituent campuses to identify other sources of revenue to maintain their quality. Finally, the Great Recession has forced systems to reconsider a host of operational issues as they have sought to address issues of access, cost, and productivity.

This chapter sets the stage for the rest of this volume. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the environmental factors affecting higher education and why now is an opportune time for higher education systems to reform themselves in ways that will provide enhanced value to their states and constituent campuses. Subsequently, I examine the reach of higher education systems in the United States, including the fact that they exist in a majority of states and serve a large proportion of the nation's college students. Next, the inherent tensions of higher education systems are discussed, along with new ways in which systems can create value for their various stakeholders. The chapter concludes by outlining a research agenda for the future study of higher education systems.

### IN SEARCH OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM 3.0

This volume focuses on the remaking of the governance, administration, and mission of higher education systems in an era of expectations for increased accountability, greater calls for productivity, and intensifying fiscal austerity. Higher education systems were first created as a means for facilitating state oversight of vastly decentralized public higher education sectors. In the 1960s and 1970s, systems began to focus also on ensuring effective use of state resources, such as controlling the duplication of academic programs. More recently, however, there has been a concerted effort by system heads to identify ways to harness the collective contributions of their various institutions to benefit the students, communities, and other stakeholders whom they serve. *Higher Education Systems 3.0* explores some of the recent dynamics of higher education systems, focusing particularly on how systems are now working to improve their effectiveness in educating students and improving communities, while also identifying new means for operating more efficiently.

In the 21st century, public higher education is confronting a number of challenges. The funding provided by many states has stagnated

or is diminishing. Demand for access to higher education is expanding, particularly among populations that have not typically pursued formal education beyond the high school diploma. Many students are now swirling through the postsecondary experience, taking courses from a wide variety of institutions (McCormick, 2003). Online educational provision has achieved widespread legitimacy, with even Ivy League institutions making significant investments in these endeavors and broadening their reach to thousands of new students (Lewin, 2012; Pappano, 2012). Finally, the world has flattened, necessitating that colleges and universities explore new ways to become internationally engaged and to prepare their students to be competitive in a global marketplace (Friedman, 2005).

Moreover, state governments are increasingly questioning the return on their investment in higher education. On one hand, they are having to find ways to balance state budgets—a difficult task given the skyrocketing costs for the health care and prison systems and, for most states, declining revenues following the Great Recession of 2008 (Zumeta & Kinne, 2011). On the other hand, states have had to respond to their constituents, who are decrying the rapidly rising cost of postsecondary education. Thus, higher education officials have had to be more active in evidencing the value that their institutions bring to their students and the communities in which they exist.

The environment in which higher education institutions now operate necessitates a reexamination of the structures that guide and govern their activities. For most public colleges and universities, this means focusing on the systems in which they operate. In the United States, responsibility for education falls to the state, meaning that there is no central education ministry or department that controls education across the nation.<sup>2</sup> As such, each state needed to develop a way to govern and administer its public colleges and universities. At first, many states followed the model of private institutions and developed lay governing boards for each of their public institutions (Duryea, 2000). However, in the 20th century, concerns began to arise about the lack of coordination among public institutions, the undue political influence some elected officials were trying to exert over individual institutions, and the increasing competition for resources (i.e., requests for state appropriations) from individual institutions (see chapter 3).

To alleviate these concerns, many states created higher education systems, overseen by comprehensive governance and administrative structures that were situated between the institutions and the state government. To be clear, in this book the focus is mostly on the multi-campus system. One of the more common definitions has been developed by the National Association of System Heads (NASH, 2011):

A public higher education system [is] a group of two or more colleges or universities, each having substantial autonomy and headed by a chief executive or operating officer, all under a single governing board which is served by a system chief executive officer who is not also the chief executive officer of any of the system's institutions.

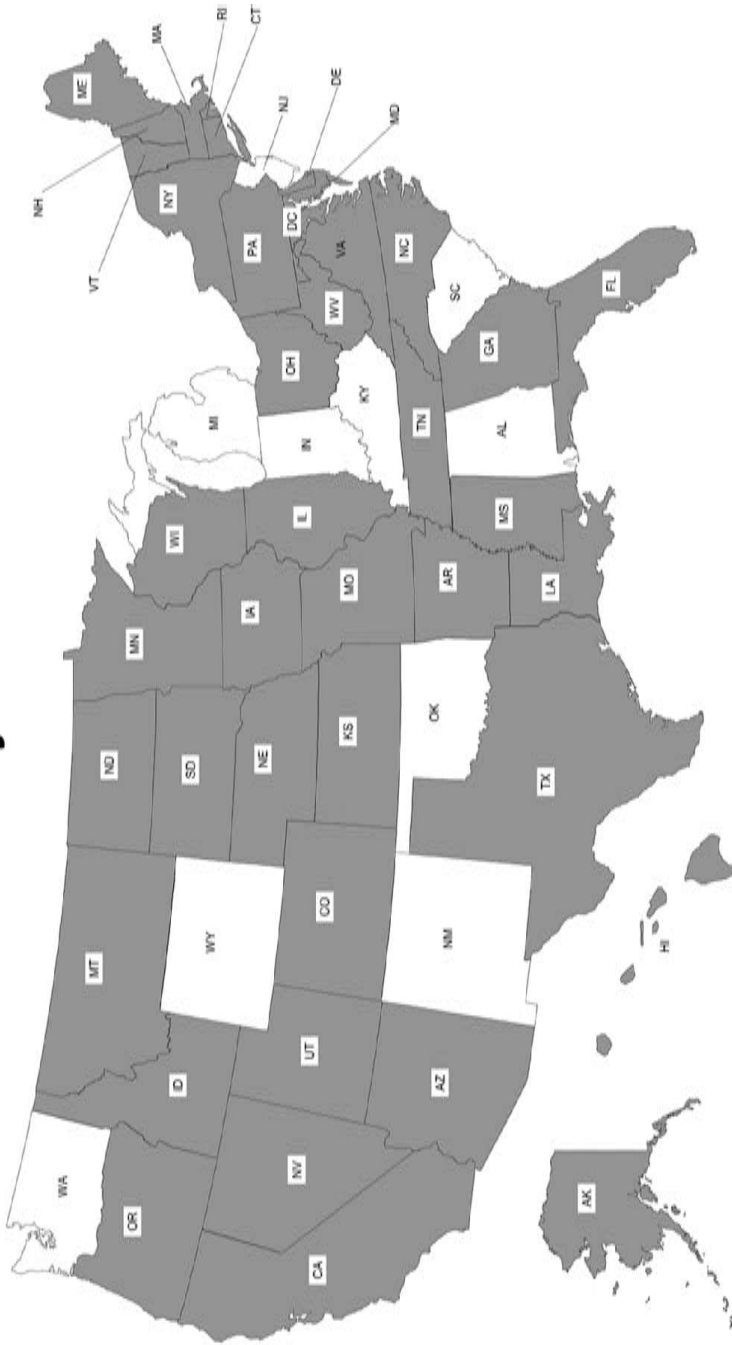
Such systems are different from a university structure wherein there is one flagship campus and a number of branch campuses.<sup>3</sup> It also does not refer to a coordinating board structure, where there is a state agency with some authority over higher education, but each institution is governed by its own governing board.<sup>4</sup> However, the tensions, visions, and new directions discussed in this volume are not limited to multi-campus systems. Many of the lessons from the varied contributions are relevant to other configurations where multiple campuses work together.

Multi-campus higher education systems are a primary component of the higher education landscape in the United States. At the time of this writing, the National Association of System Heads (2011) reported that there existed 51 multi-campus systems in the United States, spread across 38 states (see figure 1.1).<sup>5</sup> In academic year 2011, they collectively served more than six million students—approximately 30% of all postsecondary students in the United States and more than 40% of all students studying in public higher education.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, many of the leading public research universities are part of these higher education systems.

There are generally two types of multi-campus systems: segmented and comprehensive. The 23-campus California State University (CSU) system, created in 1961, is considered a segmented style system as all the campuses are similar in terms of mission and academic degrees offered (Gerth, 2010). The CSU system was created to provide broad access to higher education for the citizens of California and

Figure 1.1. States (in gray) with Public Multi-Campus Systems

## State Systems in U.S.



Source: National Association of System Heads (2011)

currently enrolls more than 400,000 students per year. The SUNY system, founded in 1948, is comprised of 64 campuses and serves more than 450,000 students annually (Leslie, Clark, & O'Brien, 2012). It is considered a comprehensive system, as it includes different institutional types, including community colleges, comprehensive colleges, research universities, and several special focus institutions.

The role of these systems has historically been to provide a level of coordination among the campuses, allocate funding from the state to the campuses, enact and enforce regulations, serve as a common voice for higher education to the state government, and communicate the needs of the state to the campuses (Lee & Bowen, 1971; Millett, 1984). However, while the existence of systems was acknowledged, many institutional leaders and scholars of higher education governance continued to emphasize the importance of individual institutions and the criticality of institutional autonomy (Corson, 1975; Millett, 1984).

This view was often reinforced as system structures evolved as a type of organization different from an institution. Specifically, they often are perceived as more bureaucratic than academic. They do not have students, faculty, or alumni—those affiliations are with the constituent campuses. Systems are not directly responsible for teaching courses or engaging in research; those functions fall to the campuses.

However, in an era of increasing competition and greater demand for demonstrating societal benefit, there exists an opportunity for systems to take a leadership role. The title of this book, *Higher Education Systems 3.0*, is intended to prompt consideration of what higher education systems can be in the future. That is, how can they reinvent themselves so that they add greater value to their states and campuses?

## WHY FOCUS ON SYSTEMS?

Multi-campus higher education systems are one of the most common ways for states to organize and govern their public colleges and universities in the United States. Despite their expansive presence in the higher education landscape, they receive very little attention from scholars. Myriad studies have examined the impacts of more or



less centralized governance structures (e.g., McLendon, 2003; Toma, 1990; Lowry, 2001a, 2001b; Zumeta, 1996), but the study of higher education systems as entities has been sparse and sporadic. The lack of scholarship in this area does not, however, diminish how significant these entities are to the operations of higher education.

The traditional roles of higher education systems are that of allocators, coordinators, and regulators. That is, they most frequently serve as a means for disbursing state appropriations to institutions; coordinating the activities and programs of campuses, primarily with an eye toward minimizing unnecessary duplication; and enacting and enforcing broad policies affecting public higher education. The extent to which any given system engages in these roles will vary based on system and state, but each to an extent will have some involvement in these areas. In many ways, systems have become very functional but not very strategic. They have become bureaucracies, not leaders; conduits of communication, not agenda setters.

This observation is not to suggest that systems are unimportant. By their very size and scope, they have become a core component within the U.S. higher education arena. They serve as a bridge between higher education institutions and their state government—serving to the extent that they can as advocates for institutions to the state government and representatives of the state government to institutions. Organizational theorists may refer to systems as “boundary spanners” (Scott & Davis, 2007). They exist in that nether region between the institution and the government, a leg in each, but never considered fully a part of either.

Higher education systems are complicated entities. A Blue Ribbon Commission (Rhode Island, 1987) focusing on the future of higher education in Rhode Island observed:

There is no preferred model or perfect system of public higher education governance. The governing system in each state must reflect unique historical, economic, social, political and geographic conditions. However, what is clear is that the governing of state public higher education systems is perhaps one of the most complex balancing acts in the field of public administration. Conflicting goals, objectives and interests are a reality. Systemwide interests are not always the same

as institutional priorities, and despite claims to the contrary, systemwide interests are not necessarily the sum of the interests of each state institution. (p. 20)

Moreover, state systems have a responsibility for identifying and helping to address the needs of the state. In most states, the public sector of higher education was created because there was a widespread belief that higher education was a public good. The notion of what comprises the public good varies based on the state. For example, in New York, SUNY was created to provide broad-based access to higher education, a role not being served by the state's private colleges (see chapter 2). In Wisconsin, one of the driving principles has been to provide service to the state in the way that the Wisconsin Idea has guided the development of the University of Wisconsin System.<sup>7</sup> The University of California system was developed with a primary mission of advancing research, knowledge, and innovation. Ultimately, it often falls to the system to support institutions and ensure that the public mission of higher education continues to be met. Sometimes this public mission is heavily grounded in the past such as with the Wisconsin Idea, but it is also very much linked to the future, with new calls for higher education to contribute to the state's economic prosperity (Lane & Johnstone, 2012).

Too often, however, the discussion about the appropriate role for higher education systems becomes bogged down in discussion of authority and autonomy, and centralization and decentralization (see chapter 4). These discussions are not unimportant, and several chapters in this volume address them. Rather than only focusing on the degree of authority divided between systems and their member institutions, it is critical to reexamine the role of systems in the future. Beyond being merely allocators, coordinators, and regulators, how can higher education systems bring greater value to their states and campuses? This is the question we pose in the search of higher education system 3.0.

## ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SYSTEMS

Any exploration of the future of systems requires an assessment of their current condition. As important as higher education systems

have become in the United States, they have been remarkably understudied. As McGuinness chronicles in chapter 3, higher education systems came of age in the decades following World War II. In fact, by the early 1970s most states had implemented some type of coordinating structure to help manage the state's public colleges and universities. Some states had adopted a multi-campus system model or several systems. Other states created coordinating boards, which were not intended to govern institutional activity but rather to provide a level of oversight and coordination of academic offerings and the state budgetary processes. One of the main differences between these two models was that systems centralized governing and coordination authority in one shared board, while coordinating models left much of the governing authority to campus-level boards.

A quick scan of the governance structures operating across the United States reveals a great deal of variability. For example, in states such as California, New York, and Texas, multiple multi-campus systems manage different aspects of the postsecondary landscape. In California, the systems are segmented with institutions grouped by similarity of mission. In New York and Texas, the systems are more geographically distinct, although some overlap exists. States such as North Dakota and South Dakota both operate statewide systems, where all of the four-year public campuses are governed by one system. Missouri combines both coordinating and system structures. The four-campus University of Missouri is a multi-campus system, while the comprehensive universities each retain their own governing board. The entirety of the public higher education sector is coordinated by Missouri's Coordinating Board of Higher Education, which has authority over institutional mission, academic program approval, and state budgetary requests. Michigan, as an alternative, is on the far extreme, in that there is no formal centralized governance or coordination, and each institution operates of its own accord.

Despite their emergence as a prominent means for organizing public higher education, scholarly inquiry into the development, operation, and leadership of systems has remained scant. Even in some of the more prominent histories about the development of U.S. higher education, systems receive very little attention. For example, Thelin (2004) dedicated only a couple of pages to chronicling the development of the higher education systems in California, particularly in light of the implementation of the state's 1960 Master Plan for higher

education (Master Plan Survey Team, 1960). He made only passing reference to similar such developments in a handful of other states. In *The Shaping of American Higher Education*, Cohen (1998) observed that there was a general trend toward greater statewide coordinating in the middle of the 20th century, noting that Section 1202 of the 1965 Higher Education Act accelerated the trend toward more coordination by requiring states to identify ways to achieve greater efficiencies in the use of government funding of higher education.

Brubacher and Rudy (2002) actually argued that one of the distinguishing features of higher education in the United States was its “unsystematized diversity” (p. 427). There is little doubt that institutions of higher education in the United States are incredibly diverse, largely due to the lack of any central coordination at the national level and very little at the state level, at least until the middle of the last century. Even the use of the term *unsystematized* could be overlooked in this context had there been some substantive discussion of the actual existence of systems or other coordinating structures existing in the United States, but such a discussion does not occur.

Much of the literature that does exist on multi-campus systems is subsumed under the theme of state coordination of higher education and dates back to the 1970s and 1980s. The literature on state coordination tends to focus on two primary areas. The first area centers on issues of disbursement of authority and autonomy in different types of governance structures (e.g., Berdahl, 1972; Corson, 1975; Millett, 1984). For example, Millett (1984) discussed statewide system governance structures in great depth, often as one form of how states organize higher education. For Millett, the multi-campus system represented a statewide governing structure with direct control over institutions, which contrasted with coordinating boards that have limited authority and advisory boards that have almost no authority.

The second area of focus concerns the academic review, planning, financing, and auditing functions of systems and how coordinating structures impact institutional operations (e.g., Callan & Jonsen, 1980; Glenny & Schmidlein, 1983; Millard, 1980). Much of this work has approached the analysis of systems from an institutional perspective, lumping the multi-campus system structure with other forms of statewide coordination activities and viewing them as a state agency rather than as a new organizational form to govern higher education. Because of this broad lumping, in many cases

analysis tended to assess how the actions of the system affected institutional operations rather than how the system fulfilled its mission of serving the state. In fact, the tension between system and institutional missions, discussed throughout this book, seemed not to be widely considered in this earlier era of analysis. In many cases, the institutional mission was simply prioritized over the system mission. Consequently, systems tended to be marginalized as bureaucratic structures, and very little attention was given to how they could add value to their states and campuses.

Much of what has been written explicitly about multi-campus higher education systems exists as policy reports, commentary, and unpublished papers (e.g., Callan, 1994a, 1994b; Johnstone, 1991, 1992, 1993; Langenberg, 1994; Lyall, 2011; McGuinness, 1991; Millett, 1982; Pettit, 1989; Yudof, 2008). However, there exists a handful of more scholarly inquiry into this area. A very small number of studies have engaged in a comprehensive examination of system structures. Some scholars have examined specific aspects of the multi-campus system, such as the role of the chief executive officer (Kauffman, 1980), decision-making processes (Timberlake, 2004), planning (Womack & Podemski, 1985), lobbying (Pettit, 1987), and accountability mechanisms (Rothchild, 2011). In each of these writings, the authors explored these specific aspects of the system, weighing the system's role and its relationship between the state and constituent campuses.

The first systematic study of multi-campus systems was completed in the early 1970s by Lee and Bowen (1971, 1975), who investigated the operations of 11 multi-campus systems, each of which was governed by a system-wide executive who did not also have responsibility for an individual campus. A decade later, Cresswell, Roskens, and Henry (1985) developed a typology of multi-campus systems, examining characteristics such as geographic breadth, composition of institutional types, administrative structure, and whether the system was public or private. Almost another 10 years later, Gade (1993) examined four multi-campus structures, identifying specific policies and good practices.

More recently, two edited volumes have examined higher education leadership and governance in the context of multi-campus systems. Gaither (1999) produced what is probably the most comprehensive examination of these entities since the work of Lee and Bowen in the 1970s. The volume, subtitled "perspectives on practice

and prospects,” gathered contributors with extensive experience in system administration to reflect on their areas of expertise and to discuss what they saw as the future of higher education systems. Schuman (2009) took a slightly different approach from most others writing about higher education systems by examining them from the perspective of those who help lead branch campuses. Not all the contributors of these two volumes worked at campuses that are part of multi-campus systems as they have been defined here, but the perspective of the academic leader who operates as part of a larger system is an important one, critical for understanding multi-campus systems.

What is interesting about both volumes (Gaither, 1999; Schuman, 2009) is that very little attention was given to the complex tensions that exist because of the different missions of systems and institutions, particularly in relation to serving the needs of the state. Most of the discussion assumed that the activities of public colleges and universities enhance the public good, but there was very little examination of what the needs of the state are and how systems and campuses might help to fulfill those goals. More to the point, there was almost no recognition that it is possible for the goals of an institution not to align with the needs of the state. In this era of fiscal austerity and greater demands of public accountability, the role of systems in steering higher education to meet the needs of the state while also protecting the institutional diversity and academic autonomy of institutions seems ever more important.

Nearly 20 years ago, McGuinness (1996) predicted:

Despite all the challenges and a few successful, radical changes, multicampus systems are likely to be even more a characteristic of American public higher education in 2015 than they are in 1995. What will change most dramatically is what constitutes a “system”; changes will be made in how systems are led and how they function, both internally and in relationships to multiple external stakeholders. (p. 222)

This volume is based on the premises that systems exist in era of dramatic change, and that many are examining how they function in relation to both internal and external stakeholders. The focus, therefore, is not explicitly or exclusively on how to improve institutional

effectiveness. Rather, the authors examine the tensions that arise when trying to balance the needs of both the state and the campuses and explore how systems can add value to each.

This volume is organized into three parts. The first part provides a history and definition of systemness. In chapter 2, Nancy Zimpher, SUNY chancellor, describes how systems can move toward a value-added orientation, drawing extensively on examples from SUNY. Aims McGuinness, senior fellow with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), traces the historical development of systems through six distinct periods. While the first part of this book (chapters 1–3) establishes the context for the volume, the second part (chapters 4–9) examines the existing tensions within higher education systems. Part three (chapters 10–13) looks into the future, examining new ways in which systems can add value to their states and campuses.

### *Challenges to System Innovation: Unpacking the Tensions*

At the core of any discussion of system tensions are the issues of authority and autonomy. In the context of public higher education, autonomy is fundamentally the freedom from state authority. This authority is multifaceted, however. The state delegates a certain level of authority to the system, which then delegates a portion to the individual campuses. How much authority is apportioned to any one level within this hierarchy will have a significant impact on the mission and activities of the campuses. These issues are explored by Bruce Johnstone, a former system head and campus president, in chapter 4.

As with many relationships, the tensions between campuses and systems often lie in the financial arrangements between them. In chapter 5, Jane Wellman, the executive director of NASH, reports findings from a 2012 survey of system finances sponsored by NASH and NCHEMS. The survey data suggested that there is a continuum of degrees of control over funds, ranging from some systems' having significant control over the disbursement of state appropriations, to others' serving only as pass-through agents that disburse funds as allocated by the state, to others' having almost no role at all as the government allocates funds directly to the campuses. The nature of the relationship between the system and its campuses is changing in

many states as funding decreases, tuition dependency increases, and performance funding mandates emerge.

The issues of authority and autonomy have propagated a number of proposed system revisions in the wake of the Great Recession. Some of the more extreme proposals have been made by leaders of flagship institutions, who tend to argue that their institutions could be more successful if not shackled with system bureaucracy and that they should be set free or granted increased levels of autonomy. Critics of such proposals assert that what may be good for individual institutions may not be best for their state, and with such freedom institutions may pursue interests that might not align with the needs of the state, such as enrolling more out-of-state students (as opposed to in-state students) as a way of increasing revenue via higher tuition rates.

Katharine Lyall, former head of the University of Wisconsin System, starts the exploration of several of these proposals in chapter 6. She argues that changing political and financial environments and shifting student markets are requiring higher education systems to modify how they operate. In addition, she asserts that if they opt not to pursue change by their own design, change will come in a chaotic manner by which they will drift among new demands.

In chapter 7, Judson King, former provost at the University of California, Berkeley, and current head of Berkeley's Center for Studies in Higher Education, explores the need to balance institution independence against system coordination. He argues that the ongoing environmental changes confronting higher education warrant more institutional autonomy so that institutions can respond quickly and confidently to these changing environments. He presents a number of alternatives to system-level governance and explores the possibility of creating campus-level boards within a system structure.

Of course, changes to higher education systems do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, they are subsumed in a larger political ecosystem comprised of many different people, processes, and structures. In chapter 8, Mario Martinez, a professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and Brandy Smith, a doctoral student at UNLV, present a model of the public higher education ecosystem, in which the work of higher education systems is compressed between pressures and expectations rising up from the campuses and pushing down from the state's public policy activity. The model is intended to



help readers understand the contextual issues that exist when trying to foster change in higher education systems.

The section concludes with chapter 9, in which Aims McGuinness, senior fellow at NCHEMS, offers an analysis of how the pressures from the Great Recession and the 2010 elections are forcing a rethinking of what an effective system is. He describes proposed changes to systems in California, Oregon, and Wisconsin. The chapter includes an assessment of the positive and negative aspects of creating campus boards within systems and concludes with the potential actions that a system could take to redefine its mission and core functions to meet the challenges of the coming decades.

### *Emerging Roles for Systems*

The pursuit of higher education systems 3.0 is about identifying new roles for systems, particularly new ways in which such entities can add value to campuses and states. Chapter 1 began with an example of how SUNY worked to bring the collective knowledge of its faculty to support New York State in preparing for future natural disasters. However, the future of systems does not lie only in pulling together researchers. It is about enhancing collaboration to find cost savings that can be reinvested into core activities such as teaching and learning, and expanding access. It is about supporting the work of campuses to have direct impact on the quality of life and economic prosperity of those who live in the state and beyond. It is about improving the educational pipeline so that students can take advantage of courses and academic programs at multiple campuses. It is about fulfilling the mission of systems to harness the power of higher education to improve the states where they are located.

In the third part of this book, authors explore some of the ways in which systems have begun to find new ways to support campuses in achieving the goals of their state. The section starts in chapter 10 with an examination by Jan Ignash, the chief academic officer of the State University System of Florida, of the changing role of systems in academic affairs. Historically, systems have focused on academic program approval, ensuring that new programs are viable and do not create unneeded duplication. However, in an area of increased accountability and enhanced awareness of the need for creating partnerships across multiple stakeholders, systems have begun to take

leadership in building and maintaining connections among K–12 education, public and private colleges and universities, government, foundations, and business and industry. In this way, systems have begun to take on new roles in bringing together relevant constituencies to improve the educational pipelines and ensure the development of an educated citizenry and competitive workforce.

Many of the new roles of systems lie outside of the areas traditionally considered their core functions. For example, another new area of engagement for systems is in economic development. Many systems have begun to identify ways for harnessing economic development activities across the system. For example, the University of Wisconsin System employs a vice president of economic development, and SUNY's latest strategic plan, *The Power of SUNY*,<sup>8</sup> has a central focus on developing the economic potential of New York State. In chapter 11, David Shaffer, a senior fellow at the Rockefeller Institute of Government, explores how several community college systems are creating system-wide initiatives to confront the predicted skills gap between the nation's workforce and projected job openings.

In addition to taking leadership in developing relatively new roles for higher education, such as economic development, systems can also provide support for functions traditionally viewed as primarily under institutional authority. Jason Lane, deputy director for research at Rockefeller Institute of Government, reports in chapter 12 on part of a study on the growing involvement of systems and government in the internationalization of higher education. He finds that there are both reputational advantages and economies of scale that can be achieved by systems, which are not possible for many institutions. However, system involvement in these areas, which have traditionally been an institutional responsibility, can create tensions, and serious consideration needs to be given to what extent new programs or services are mandated or optional for campuses. Too much direction from the system level could quash the grassroots initiatives that tend to drive much internationalization at the campus level.

Finally, the volume concludes with an exploration by David Weerts, a professor at the University of Minnesota, of how systems can support the public engagement of their campuses. As discussed previously in this chapter, the University of Wisconsin System has been driven by the Wisconsin Idea, which views the entire state as the campus of the state's public higher education sector and is grounded on the idea that public higher education should work to improve the

quality of life for the state's citizens. Weerts argues in chapter 12 that there is now a renewed desire among systems to re-envision the civic roles and responsibilities of colleges and universities.

The discussions presented here are only a snapshot of the new directions that higher education systems might pursue in the future. The topics of these chapters were selected to evidence the development of higher education systems 3.0, but there are still many more options to be explored.

## AN EYE TOWARD THE FUTURE

One of the few certainties of the governance of public higher education is that it is ever changing. It seems that every year at least one state is evaluating, if not changing, the composition of its higher education system governance structures. Such changes seem to go through evolutions of more or less centralization of authority, although it is very unlikely that states—at least the vast majority that now have it—will completely eliminate central coordination. In fact, McGuinness appears to be correct that systems are more important now than they were 20 years ago, and they are likely to grow in importance in the coming decade.

Even though states now pay a lower share of the overall operating costs of public higher education than they have in the past, they still expect that public colleges and universities contribute to the overall well-being of the state and its citizens. This expectation means that the role of systems will likely expand beyond being administrative bureaucracies. Their value will be found in their ability to communicate the contributions of campuses to state leaders, enable campuses to pursue their missions, and steer campuses to meet the needs of the state.

## NOTES

1. The terms *campuses* and *institutions* are often used interchangeably in the volume in reference to the academic entities of which systems are comprised.
2. There is a U.S. Department of Education, which is headed by a member of the president's cabinet. This entity is responsible for overseeing the federal financial aid system and a host of other

- federally funded programs for higher education. It also implements federal regulations for higher education, but it does not have any direct control over the nation's colleges and universities. See Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, and Dorman (2012) for more information about federal engagement in postsecondary education.
3. An example of this type of system is the Pennsylvania State University, which has 24 campuses. The flagship campus is located at University Park, and the president of that campus also serves as the head of the entire university.
  4. Missouri's Coordinating Board for Higher Education has some limited budgetary and academic approval authority over all public colleges and universities in the state. However, the governing authority of each institution is vested in separate governing boards. One of those institutions, the University of Missouri, is an example of a multi-campus system as it has four campuses, each with its own chancellor. A single president oversees the entire system.
  5. In the fall of 2012, the Louisiana State University System was undergoing structural changes that may result in the system becoming a single institution with multiple branch campuses and no longer fitting the NASH definition for a multi-campus system.
  6. These numbers are calculated by dividing the total headcount for all multi-campus systems in academic year 2011 by the total number of students in the United States.
  7. The Wisconsin Idea is the belief that the state's university system should provide benefit "to the government in the forms of serving in office, offering advice about public policy, providing information and exercising technical skill, and to the citizens in the forms of doing research directed at solving problems that are important to the state and conducting outreach activities" (Stark, 1995, p. 20).
  8. More about *The Power of SUNY* and how the system is measuring its impact can be found at <http://www.suny.edu/powerofsuny/>.

## REFERENCES

- Berdahl, R. O. (1971). *Statewide coordination of higher education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Brubacher, J. S., & Rudy, W. (2002). *Higher education in transition:*