

Book Reviews



Bok, Derek. *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Pr., 2003. 233p. alk. paper, \$22.95 (ISBN 0691114129). LC 2002-29267.

A stale joke in academe asks, “Do you know why academic infighting is so vicious?” The traditional response is “because the stakes are so small.” But it may be time to retire this hackneyed sarcasm. No longer can anyone claim the stakes are so small. For example, by 1996 Stanford and the University of California had earned more than \$150 million in royalties on a patent for gene splicing. Columbia University, exploiting its 1983 patent for a method of making protein-generating cells, earned about \$100 million *per year* during the patent’s last days of validity. That patent expired in 2000, and the university attempted to persuade Congress to extend it. When that effort failed, Columbia filed new patent claims that would have guaranteed it seventeen more years of a multimillion-dollar income.¹

Many universities have gained great wealth by allying themselves with the commercial sector, licensing their patents or otherwise associating themselves with large-scale industries.² Although modern American universities may not all be exactly rolling in money, many have found ways to tap wealth undreamed of only a generation ago. In fact, declares Derek Bok, by the year 2000, American universities’ annual income from royalties exceeded a *billion* dollars!

The purpose of Bok’s *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education* is to investigate the history of academic connections to commerce, assess the consequences of such alliances, and examine their potential impact. Bok’s twenty-year tenure as president of Harvard puts him in a unique position to analyze and judge the consequences of the academic-commercial connection. He analyzes three

distinct areas of the modern university’s involvement with commerce: athletics, scientific research, and higher education itself. Bok begins his analysis of each area with a careful summary of how business connections have truly benefited higher education. It would be entirely wrong to suggest that, in so doing, Bok is merely playing a game: acknowledging the true benefits of university-business liaisons only to immediately devalue them by illustrating instances of egregious malfeasance. It quickly becomes evident that he is not setting up straw men. Bok outlines in considerable detail exactly how connections to commerce have materially and incontrovertibly assisted higher education. But those advantages have not come without substantial costs. After acknowledging the benefits, Bok immediately summarizes the risks, damages, disadvantages, and even sometimes the falsehoods of the claimed assistance. The result is a devastating critique of how the advantages of commercial alliances have often not only failed the ultimate purposes of higher education in the United States, but also damaged its potential.

Athletics is the first area subject to Bok’s critique. Candidly and mercilessly, he summarizes the ugly history of intercollegiate football—its failed promise to “build character,” its unsupportable claim to have helped minorities achieve a high-quality education, and its grievous undermining of academic standards. Students whose academic achievement and potential would hardly qualify them for careers in any learned profession are not only routinely admitted to universities of every quality but are even turned into national celebrities. Looking at the revenue-generating sports, mainly football and basketball, Bok informs the reader that as of 2001, some thirty coaches were earning in excess of a million dollars annually, far more

than most college and university presidents. Bok strongly focuses on the almost complete disconnect between athletic prowess and academic achievement. He builds a powerful indictment:

What can intercollegiate sports teach us about the hazards of commercialization? First of all, the saga of big-time athletics reveals that American universities, despite their lofty ideals, are not above sacrificing academic values—even values as basic as admission standards and the integrity of their courses—in order to make money.

Indeed, Bok reaches the conclusion, described by him as “melancholy,” that through their athletic programs, “universities have compromised the most fundamental purpose of academic institutions.”

Turning to his second area, scientific research, Bok maintains that the record has been no less dismal and the battles between the worlds of intellect and industry no less ruthless: Scientists have been prohibited from publishing (or even discussing at conferences) results unfavorable to their commercial sponsors’ marketing goals. Companies have punished universities by threatening to withhold promised financial support should scientists dare to publish data unfavorable to sponsors’ interests. Researchers have been threatened with lawsuits, even grievously defamed. Companies have imposed a militarylike secrecy upon faculty who work with them, severely edited scholars’ reports, and even had their own staffs write slanted drafts to which university researchers were expected to attach their names. By Bok’s account, some elements of the commercial sector merely look upon faculty and graduate students as company agents—virtual employees, hired guns—charged to produce a stream of research from which will follow a stream of revenue for their businesses. Bok’s charges are not vague hints; he cites prestigious institutions, names researchers whose careers were jeopard-

dized or damaged by threats and personal attacks, and provides many poignant details.

In the third area, higher education itself, Bok outlines the temptations of easy money, ostensibly available via universities’ willingness, indeed eagerness, to use the income from distance education (both domestically and abroad) to finance programs only indirectly linked to higher education. Bok further suggests that some schools willingly exploit the Internet more for the money than for any possible social benefit.

“Is everything in a university for sale if the price is right?” asks the book jacket. Are universities now ready to accept advertising within physical facilities and curricula? Will they permit commercial enterprises to put company names on the stadium, team uniforms, campus shuttle buses, book jackets sold at the campus bookstore, plastic cups at food service points, or even on home pages? Will universities sell the names of entire schools as well as of buildings? Worse yet, will some schools be tempted to accept endowed professorships to which the sponsors seek to attach unacceptable or harmful restrictions and conditions? There appears to be no end to the opportunities.

To respond to these and similar troubling questions, Bok’s two concluding chapters lay out practical steps the academic community might consider to avoid sinking into a quagmire of commercialism in which the academy is sure to lose control of both its integrity and its autonomy. Throughout his work, Bok reminds his readers of the obvious, but sometimes camouflaged (or ignored), distinction between the academy and commerce: The mission of the former is to learn, that of the latter to earn. Conflict between these missions is inevitable, and should it disappear, the university as we know it also may vanish. We may not like what replaces it.

Paper, ink, typeface, and other elements of the graphic arts powerfully influence a book’s efficacy as an educational instrument. *Universities in the Marketplace*

does not disappoint. In fact, it excels. The book's felicitous graphic design is an enormous help to reading ease and comprehension. Princeton did not stint on the leading between lines and paragraphs. A less generous publisher might have produced a very much cheaper and shorter—but far more difficult to read—book. In respect to references, it is easy to move from text to endnotes because the latter have convenient running titles listing both chapter number and chapter name. It is a mystery why all publishers of scholarly texts do not follow this obviously reader-friendly design.

Although Bok's writing is admirably clear and succinct, occasional grammatical and spelling lapses irritate. Half a dozen times, the author associates a singular subject with a plural pronoun (e.g., "Everyone must do their part"). But correct usage occurs very often. Why these exceptions? Norbert Wiener's name is rendered correctly on page 140 but becomes Weiner two pages later.

The index is more than acceptable, even though entries for some topics are incomplete and a few are missing (e.g., gene splicing, a topic discussed in some detail). Although many endnotes are indexed, a memorable and damning quotation from Peter Drucker, "The business schools of the U.S. set up less than a century ago have been preparing well-trained clerks," is not easily retrieved because it appears in an unindexed endnote. Although Bok focuses almost entirely on the United States, he cites cogent analysis from two Australian scholars, Marginson and Considine, who deal with the "enterprise university" in that country. Yet, there is no easy way to find their critique because there is no index entry under Australia. Readers are much more likely to remember the country than the authors.

Bok, who was president of Harvard from 1971 to 1991, is surely among the most highly qualified educators able to discuss these issues. His work is neither a diatribe against commercial involvement nor an inventory of despair but, rather, a fair and balanced presentation

of the complete range of factors that a university must consider before establishing a permanent liaison with the commercial sector. Bok maintains clearly and persuasively that if responsible officers in higher education fail to manage business connections aggressively, the goals of higher education will continue to be in jeopardy. There is even the possibility that some undesirable changes in universities could become irreversible. In each major area—athletics, scientific research, and higher education—Bok administers such powerful blows that one is reminded of a champion prizefighter knocking out one contender after another. His work serves as a warning that overintimate links to commerce may put at risk a university's most precious resources—its academic integrity and its credibility among the community of scholars, the public, and the government. He asks academic administrators to consider whether such dangers outweigh the supposed benefits, whether academic leaders really want their universities to enter into "Faustian bargains" with industry.

How many times have you wished for a book that illuminated an exceedingly complex social issue with a brilliant, glareless lamp, a book written with a wonderful economy of words, in a felicitous style, free of jargon, with keenly analyzed arguments presented in direct, easily comprehensible language? Derek Bok's *Universities in the Marketplace* fulfills such a wish and does so brilliantly. It should be in the library of every research university and on the must-read lists of presidents, provosts, deans, principal investigators, technology transfer officers—and maybe on the reading lists of some coaches, as well.—Allen B. Veaner, *University of Arizona*.

1. Currently, five biotechnology companies are suing Columbia to invalidate the university's revised patent filings. ("3 More Biotech Companies Sue Columbia Over Patent," *New York Times*, National Edition, July 16, 2003, p. A19.)

2. Arizona state-supported universities may soon be next in lining up for connections to industry. In 2003, the state legislature enabled the Arizona Board of Regents to buy stock in a company in the expectation of profit sharing following successful commercial exploitation of university research.

Charleston Conference Proceedings 2001.

Ed. Katina Strauch. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2003. 222p. \$45 (ISBN 1591580730). LC 2003-535343.

The Charleston Conference has once again produced a volume of stimulating discussions on issues challenging today's libraries and librarians. These papers (28 in all) were given at the 2001 conference, the twenty-first annual meeting that traditionally brings librarians, publishers, and vendors together to cover an array of topics of interest to all librarians, but especially to those working in acquisitions and collection management. Dominating the discussions (or at least present as a pervasive subtext in most of the papers) is recognition of the increasingly uneasy relationship between librarians and publishers/online vendors over the issues of access and price schedules. This conflict is most apparent in the negotiations between librarians and online serials vendors, and a number of the conference papers either outline the problems or try to explain some of the factors that have brought us to this state of affairs.

Indeed, Tom Sanville (OhioLINK) takes on the librarian-vendor issue directly in his thought-provoking keynote address entitled "The Trends They Are A'Changing." He explains one of the major reasons for the current chaos: We are all, he says, directly and daily faced with constant change in so many variables (technology, publishing practices, pricing, user needs) that "it's impossible for us to really know what we're doing." To make matters worse, few, if any, of these variables are under our control. The goal of OhioLINK (and any library) is to provide "economically sustainable increased information access," but libraries are losing ground each year trying to meet

this ideal. In the short term, we must become better, more discerning buyers of databases and database packages. Perhaps we must even say no to subscriptions to enormously expensive online "package deals" and turn our attention to what is actually needed and used by our clientele. We no longer can offer our patrons the entire universe of knowledge from which to make their selections; it is need and usage that should be the deciding factors in our purchases.

A counterview is presented by David Goodman (Princeton) and Chuck Hamaker (UNC, Charlotte) in their paper, "Debate: Resolved, The Only Remaining Purpose of the Library Is as a Social Center." They note the increasing trend among faculty and students to use OCLC's WorldCat or the RLG catalog rather than the local library's catalog. "[I]f we had the copy it would show up first and if we didn't, they would at least know it existed." Similarly, maintaining that the goal of an academic library is, indeed, to provide the entire universe of information to our clientele, Goodman reasons that almost every journal in the world will be used at some point in an academic library.

David Kohl (U. Cincinnati Digital Press) in his paper, "Mass Purchase versus Selection," presents the view that traditional access (i.e., ownership) to print journals was never very extensive to begin with. A study of Ohio academic libraries revealed that the average number of journal titles actually owned by a library was only around 25 percent of potentially useful titles. Kohl advocates the new model of acquisition (publisher packages) because it is consortial, inflation is negotiated, and the individual library pays a little more but gets a lot more for its money (including access to all of a publisher's journals); all three elements benefit the library.

Vendor viewpoints also are well represented in this volume. Presenters include staff from Elsevier, EBSCO, Greenwood, John Wiley, Serials Solutions, and Total Information, Inc. Sensitive to the li-