

Highlighted Blog - Unsettle, and Enrich, the Public Discourse on Higher Education

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As a longstanding member of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) community, I feel a responsibility to share my thoughts regarding an obligation that-I believe-requires our attention.

From my perspective, research on higher education by ASHE members has flourished over the past several decades. ASHE graduate students as well as faculty are both framing and pursuing inquiry on the most formidable challenges facing our colleges and universities. These challenges, as defined by scholars in our field, include: the need for federal, state, system, and campus policies that address the widely-neglected and rapidly growing inequality between elite institutions and regional colleges and universities, Minority-Serving Institutions, and two-year colleges; the need to unsettle the Ivory Tower not only to embody diversity on a daily basis but to embrace promising practices for increasing the access, the persistence, and the learning (including in STEM fields of study) of traditionally underserved racial, ethnic, and low-income students; the micromanagement of public higher education by a growing number of elected state officials; and the hubris of a growing number of college and university presidents, deans, trustees and board members, alumni, and tenured faculty who embrace the market-model without reservation and embody self-serving entrepreneurialism at the expense of adjunct faculty, staff, and equal educational opportunity for all students.

Notwithstanding the quality and volume of research being generated by ASHE members and the establishment of higher education as a legitimate field of study within the academy, our voices and faces are often invisible on our campuses, in our local communities and state capitals, and in the mainstream discourse about the challenges facing higher education. To be sure, many ASHE members are giving expression to their scholarship through columns and op-eds (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Huffington Post*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*) as well as in public media such as radio and television. But too many of us-me included-have not met a widely-shared obligation to contribute to the common good by sharing our scholarship in the public domain. I think it is time for more of us to take the initiative to publicly advance our "ideas" both for defining and addressing the escalating challenges and growing inequalities facing higher education and our rapidly changing society.

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