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SINCE the 1950s, financial support for higher education has been a cycle of ups and downs. But that pattern, while aggravating in its inconsistency, appears to have settled into a protracted period of declining public support. Beginning with the recession that occurred in the spring of 2001 and accelerating after the terrorist attacks later that year, steep and sudden declines in tax revenues and stock values resulted in budget cuts for higher education that were both unexpected and unusually deep. The funding crisis thus precipitated, viewed from a perspective of four years later, marks a major shift in the financing of higher education, not just another downturn that will necessarily pass when the economy picks up or the government changes. In her plenary address to the ADE Summer Seminar East in 2004, published in this issue of the *Bulletin*, Annette Kolodny reported that her informal survey of presidents and provosts "always named the current financial crisis as their number one priority and biggest headache." Data about budgets, enrollments, and faculty salaries suggest that these recent retrenchments are more extreme than in previous cycles and extend a pattern of declining state support. With less public funding, institutions must seek new sources of funding that in turn bring new agendas into our institutions. These changes in financing are reshaping higher education at almost every level—not just budget and tuition, but also faculty, curriculum, access, management, workload, teaching, and research. The difficulties produced by these internal pressures, moreover, are being reinforced by a probing new scrutiny from outside the academy. Provoked by the double bind of declining educational revenues and rising costs and by new questions about access and quality, external pressures for change in higher education have come with increasing intensity from taxpayers, corporations, and state and federal governments.

One trend is for states to spread state support for education across both the public and private sectors with such programs as vouchers and other kinds of support to the private colleges, a change that further stretches limited resources to help even more institutions. As "state-supported" systems draw less of their budgets from state funds, they develop sources of new funding that bring with them new agendas. The so-called corporatization of the university is the direct outcome of increased dependence on market forces and of reliance on external funding. A number of public universities—in Colorado, Oregon, and Texas, for example—have sought a fundamental alteration in their relation to state funding in the hope that an entrepreneurial model can generate more support than the state has supplied, although it is not at all clear that states will be willing to give up substantial oversight even if their financial contribution is small. Pressure grows in some states, such as California, to use the community colleges for the first two years of college, and articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions influence curriculum. Students enrolled in four-year institutions are also co-enrolling in community colleges to take core requirements, such as freshman composition, at reduced tuition rates. Economic pressures intensify the process of stratification between a select group of research universities and an increasingly large number of four-year institutions and community colleges with overcrowded classes and a growing number of non-tenure-track faculty members at low salaries. Such developments

The ADE Executive Committee appointed the ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Changes in the Structure and Financing of Higher Education in December 2002. The Ad Hoc Committee met in May 2003, November 2003, May 2004, and October 2004. The ADE Executive Committee approved the Ad Hoc Committee's final report in December 2004.

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exacerbate the tension between higher education's teaching and research missions.[1]

The ADE Executive Committee, at its meeting in December 2002, appointed an ADE ad hoc committee to look into the effects of financial pressures on hiring, salaries, teaching loads, and the ability of departments to fulfill their educational missions. By the fall of 2003 it was clear that higher education faced not only economic constraint but also the prospect of far-reaching significant structural change. In June 2003 the committee solicited information from chairs on the ADE electronic discussion list (ADECH-L) about funding in their institutions. The committee received informative responses from chairs at every kind of school from all around the country. The majority reported that budget cuts were affecting such critical issues as salary, hiring, and teaching load. This report represents the committee's study of those accounts, other reports from higher education organizations, official legislative budget reports, statistical data, and numerous articles on public policy, the economy, and higher education. The committee hopes that this report will provide faculty members a wider context in which to understand their local situations and a clearer sense of the issues at stake.

The difficult budgets of 2002–04 sharply accelerated and exposed an overall pattern of decades of declining public support for higher education. The shortfalls in state budgets in 2002–04 were unexpected and severe. Though the economy stabilized in some areas in 2004, government reports issued since the November 2004 election indicate that job growth remains far below what many economists predicted and that a net loss of 313,000 jobs since early 2001 has not yet been made up (Crutsinger). Such long-term damage to the tax base suggests that the overall pattern of budgetary constraint is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, bringing with it long-range change that may affect the size of the tenure-track faculty, overall workload, the level of salary growth, and the rate of expansion for programs and institutions. Because disciplines in the humanities have historically been more dependent than the sciences on institutional support from state funds, they may feel the impact of change first. The future may bring some hard choices between the affordable and the academically sound; it may also bring opportunities for faculty members to influence programs and institutional agendas.

National Trends in Funding for Higher Education

In 2004 higher education was in its fourth year of acute financial stress because of reductions in state funding or investment losses. At the beginning of this period of decline, in 2001, Peter Schmidt reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that in state budgets for fiscal year 2001–02 "aggregate appropriations for higher education rose by a total of 4.6%, the smallest such increase in five years." James C. Palmer, at Illinois State University, who conducts annual studies of state funding for higher education, noted that these figures did not take into account the midyear rescissions in state spending.[2] In fiscal year 2001–02 forty states had shortfalls on revenue projections to meet the planned budget expenditures, and higher education in these states typically took cuts to cover the deficit. In FY 2002–03 thirty-nine states had shortfalls. The states that balanced their FY 2002–03 budgets typically did so by increasing some taxes and making cuts to higher education, corrections, and Medicaid. A handful of states where revenues are largely from mineral rights or property taxes instead of sales tax or income taxes did not experience revenue problems, and their higher education systems did not experience diminished funding. Education is usually the single largest discretionary portion of a state's budget (31% on average), making higher education vulnerable to cuts if a state encounters fiscal trouble. The projections were that FY 2003–04 would see a 4.3% increase over FY 2002–03, but Palmer's survey for FY 2003–04 reported that for the first time in eleven years, overall appropriations for higher education fell, by 2.1%. Palmer's most recent report, for FY 2004–05 shows that state appropriations for higher education rose by 3.8% over FY 2003–04. While increases are encouraging in a few states, the overall average increase was not enough to wipe out previous losses. In twenty-one states the appropriations outpaced inflation, but in some large states, such as Texas, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Oregon, minus budgets prevailed. In another twenty states increases ranged from zero to 2.9%, appropriations that do not match inflation. Examined in detail, Palmer's figures indicate that sizable increases in a handful of states, such as Florida with an 11.1% increase, elevated the percentage of average increase without signaling a general turnaround. In Florida, California, Ohio, and Virginia, the increased funding was directed at the community colleges. In California, for example, community college funding increased 36.2%, but the University of California system funding took a 5.1% cut.

In FY 2003–04 about half of the states decreased appropriations for higher education, and in Massachusetts, Colorado, and South Carolina cuts were in the double digits. Many large states such as California, New York, Illinois, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin were among those with reductions in state appropriations to higher education. Of the most populous states, only Texas and Ohio did not have decreases, though their increases were no more than 1.4% and .08% respectively, well below the 2.2% cost-of-living increase for the year. Many of the states with decreased appropriations also received mid-year cuts in 2001–02 and reductions in 2002–03. In summary, the state funding budget picture for higher education shows some signs of stabilizing in about half the states over what it was in the last four years. But significant rebuilding of funding levels for higher education seems unlikely, especially in the light of the growing list of unfunded or underfunded federal mandates—principally Medicaid and most recently No Child Left Behind—that increasingly lay claim to what were once discretionary funds in state budgets.

Many institutions—especially public institutions, where tuition has historically been low—have increased tuition sharply to help cover losses in funding. Such tuition increases have further stirred the anger of many parents and students who were already feeling priced out of higher education. Legislatures in more than a dozen states have urged colleges to limit tuition or have proposed curbs on increases. Although the legislation was finally withdrawn, in September 2003, Representative John Boehner (Republican, Ohio), chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and committee member Representative Howard McKeon (Republican, California), who chairs the Subcommittee on Twenty-First Century Competitiveness, issued a report, *The College Cost Crisis*, which describes higher education as in a crisis of "uncontrolled cost increases" and a "cost explosion" (Boehner and McKeon). The core assertions of the Boehner-McKeon report are that

tuition increases have consistently outpaced the rate of inflation and increases in household income;

the increases have occurred in good times and bad, regardless of national economic and state budgetary circumstances, and in the face of substantial increases in the dollars being poured into student aid;

the primary culprits are wasteful spending and poor accounting and fiscal controls at colleges and universities;

as a result college is becoming less affordable and being priced out of the reach of more and more Americans.

Assertions such as these ignore or obscure the decades-old pattern of states reducing their share of funding for higher education, especially public higher education. Tuition increases reflect costs shifting from general public support to those families whose children attend college. One measure of state support for higher education is the dollar amount states appropriate annually for higher education per $1,000 of state personal income; this measure compares state appropriations for higher education with the available state personal income tax base. In the January 2004 issue of the newsletter *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, the Mortensen Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education employs this measure to document the decline that has occurred since the 1970s ("State Tax Fund Appropriations . . . FY 1961 to FY 2004"). After reaching a high point in the mid-1970s, when $10.56 per $1,000 of state personal income was appropriated to higher education, the figures have fallen steadily to $6.80 per $1,000 in FY 2003–04. This further decline from the $7.12 per $1,000 of FY 2002–03 is $9.2 billion below the FY 2000–01 state investment and $33.4 billion below the high point of investment in the 1975–76 and 1977–78 fiscal years (6). The decline in state appropriations between FY 2000–01 and FY 2003–04 is 13.2%. The authors of the 2004 *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* report note that New Mexico is the only state since 1978 to register an overall increase (0.2%) in the amount of dollars per $1,000 allocated to higher education, though between FY 2000–01 and FY 2003–04 even New Mexico saw a decline of 3.1%. Seven states (Colorado, Arizona, South Carolina, Washington, Oregon, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire) have suffered 50% or more declines in state investment in higher education per $1,000 since 1978. A few states with historically low levels of public support for higher education have seen minimal increases in state spending: in the last four years, only Nevada, Louisiana, Wyoming, Hawaii, and South Dakota increased their educational appropriations. In the same period the severest appropriations loss was in Massachusetts, which experienced a reduction of 36.9%. Another six states (South Carolina, Colorado, Virginia, Missouri, Oregon, and Iowa) had reductions in state investment of more than 20%.

As a result of these funding patterns, many "state-supported" colleges have become "state-assisted" and must increase tuition and seek new revenue sources even as they are forced to contemplate changes that reduce students' educational choices and opportunities. A weaker economy has meant a shrinking of all areas of financial support for higher education at a time of increases in enrollments and costs for services, health care, and operations. If financial conditions were to improve, endowments could recover, but many colleges will continue to need tuition increases if they are to return to recent levels of funding.

Market downturns meant that many of the private colleges and universities with the largest endowments suffered significant losses in income since they typically are the most dependent on endowment income. Colleges and universities with more modest endowments have weathered the fluctuating markets slightly better. After endowments lost some 23% of value since 2000, the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) reported that institutions averaged a 3% return on investments in 2003. That modest earning was offset by a 2.2% inflation rate and an average endowment withdrawal rate of 5.4%. The percentage of operating budgets from endowment revenues ranges widely among private colleges and universities, from as much as 10% to 40% (Lord). The spending policies of these institutions vary, but most base their calculation of the amount they may spend from endowment revenues in any given year on the average of the preceding twelve quarters of their endowment's market value. While this method dampens the volatility of ups and downs in market performance, it also reduces the dollar amounts available for longer time periods following market declines, even if there is a strong upturn. At institutions with modest endowments, the effect of such caution can persist, even after a recovery, delaying the opportunity to make strategic investments and implement plans.

How well private colleges weathered the market downturn depended not just on endowment wealth but also on endowment strategy—aggressive or conservative—and the rate of growth of endowments in boom times. For example, NACUBO figures for percentage of change between 2002 and 2003 show that among the top ten institutions in endowment assets, eight grew and two declined. The growth, however, ranged from 0.9% for the University of Texas system and 13.1% at Stanford, and declines ranged from 4.2% at MIT to 11.7% at Emory University. In the 1990s, colleges with very aggressively organized endowments emphasizing private equities (e.g., in hedge funds, growth funds, and venture capital) grew rapidly (Lord). It became tempting to assume that this bounty was inevitable, and the vast growth in some colleges' endowments encouraged new building projects and expanded curricular programs. When the market fell, the result on some campuses was half-finished buildings, inadequately funded commitments to programs, and other initiatives that were difficult to sustain or demoralizing to dismantle. Other colleges and universities, with more traditional portfolios of bonds, equities, and fixed annuities, made fewer gains in their endowments and consequently fewer expansions of buildings and programs. Despite the protections that endowments offer, the dependence of private institutions on philanthropy and market-related earnings has meant that salary and hiring freezes and other cuts have been necessary to balance budgets even as tuition was raised to historic highs. Institutions that once thought tuition was infinitely elastic have begun to wonder whether resistance to price increases means that this assumption is no longer valid (although application rates to elite private institutions continue to go up).

Bad times on the financial market also typically coincide with declines in family income, which leads in turn to larger demands on the financial aid budgets of private colleges and universities that offer need-based scholarships. When the stock market boom of the 1990s collapsed, many private colleges and universities experienced a financial squeeze as endowment income decreased at the very same time that the costs of financial aid rose. Not all financial aid budgets were able to keep up, and the difficulties many students face in financing their schooling interfere with their access to education and their academic progress. These financial anxieties may also distort a student's choice of academic focus. Because many private colleges commit four years of financial aid to a student, the time between the emergence of a problem in the financial aid budget and its solution can be quite long.

Yet another less recognized but growing pressure on private universities is the need to contribute payments in lieu of taxes to the municipalities in which they are located. Despite their tax-exempt status, the growth of these institutions, with their large research budgets and their involvement in various revenue-generating activities (patents and licenses, technology transfer, drug testing for pharmaceutical companies, continuing education, etc.), has often made them seem to local government leaders more like businesses and less like not-for-profit agencies. The growth of universities may have benefits for the local economy, but the fire, police, water, sanitation, sewage, and other municipal services they demand place increased burdens on local revenue and tax structures. At the same time municipalities, especially in urban environments, have faced financial pressures that have stretched their ability to provide basic services, and they have sought alternative sources of revenue. Because the universities have seemed comparatively well off and because their expansion has contributed to the erosion of the tax base, municipalities have increasingly turned to them to request the payment of taxes or, as a compromise that universities have sought as a substitute to preserve their tax-exempt status, payments in lieu of taxes. Sometimes these payments are tied to properties that come off the tax rolls, sometimes they are made as in-kind contributions (of goods or services like computers for schools or access to educational programs), and sometimes they are given as a lump sum distributed over a period of years. While once an unusual arrangement, it has become common for major private urban research universities to make payments in lieu of taxes. Many private institutions have entered into such arrangements, and the practice is spreading.

Community colleges are generally more reliant on public funds than four-year institutions and have notably smaller endowment resources. They are also dependent on student enrollments because of formula funding and the importance of tuition income for their budgets. Once funded largely by local tax levies, in recent decades community colleges have increasingly been supported with state funds. With few income sources other than tuition, the community colleges have often felt a disproportionate pinch from cuts in government funding while at the same time managing increased enrollments and public pressure to keep tuition affordable. Perhaps because of their heavy reliance on tuition for operational budgets, community colleges experience most directly the inverse relation between the economy (specifically unemployment figures) and enrollment: the worse the job market, the better the enrollment. In some states, community colleges have fared somewhat better than four-year colleges and universities. States and municipalities that recognized the responsiveness of community colleges in providing open access to higher education and serving the immediate needs of local populations spared some community college systems the truly damaging budget cuts dealt to other postsecondary institutions. The deep budget cuts and tuition increases planned for California in 2004, for example, were scaled back, but generally at the expense of the four-year institutions. At the City University of New York, tuition increases at community colleges were coupled with a commitment to hiring new tenure-track faculty members in an effort to replace retirees and to reduce the reliance on part-time teachers. When community college systems increased tuition, the increases often matched maximum levels of state and federal student financial aid; for qualifying students, therefore, the increases did not necessarily create immediate hardships, since financial aid still covered costs. Were tuition to rise again, however, or were financial aid cut, many students would be priced out of an education they once received at little or no cost. Closing the door of educational opportunities at community colleges for such students would reverberate throughout higher education and society at large.

Reports from Chairs

Responses from the ADE's electronic discussion list for chairs (ADECH-L) throughout the summer of 2003 indicated that few English departments had escaped new financial pressures. Almost every department in state-supported institutions felt the effects in hiring, salary increases, or operations, though the effects were often less severe than initial dire projections. A few institutions, mainly small private colleges where budgets are driven primarily by tuition charges, reported no change in their funding. An even smaller number of respondents indicated that their support had gone up. Chairs reported departmental cuts ranging from 3% of operating budget to 15% of the department's total budget. Since the public university cuts were caused by shortfalls in the state budgets, most of these reductions came out of the base budget and are not expected to be restored in subsequent budget cycles. The most common report was that institutions dealt with budget cuts by not replacing departing faculty members. A significant number of chairs reported hiring freezes. A number of institutions reported that previously authorized searches were held up until it was too late in the academic year to hire. Some colleges offered retirement incentives as a way of controlling their deficits, encouraging retirements that departments may not have anticipated and were not allowed to replace.

Many departments lost the vacant line of anyone at any rank. Funding for adjuncts was a common target for cuts. At these schools the effect was to reduce the number of classes available to students or increase course load or class size. The reports of unfilled positions and the layoff of adjunct professors suggest that the teaching strength of departments often bore the brunt of the cuts. The course load of faculty members was protected in most PhD-granting departments, but class size often increased. In non-PhD institutions, workload was increased in some departments to meet enrollment pressures. A number of chairs reported the loss of reduced time for other activities, such as administrative work, either for themselves or vice chairs or graduate chairs. One chair wrote eloquently of the difficulty of filling the administrative offices of the department without being able to offer any staff support to faculty members who were asked to take on these duties. Another was now combining chair duties with a 4-4 teaching load.

Most universities protected the tenured faculty members, even when shutting down programs. A few chairs raised the possibility that their department might face a merger with another department if budget constraints continue. No English departments reported dismissing tenured faculty members. Many chairs reported that their departments were not able to hire as many new positions in the last two years as they had lost through retirements or departures. The number of jobs advertised in the 2003–04 *JIL* indicates that hiring has been in a slowdown. Since the recent peak in academic year 2000–01, when the *JIL*'s English edition carried announcements for 1,828 positions, the number of positions advertised has declined by 287 (15.7%). The total of 1,541 positions for 2003–04 represents a decline of 139 (8%) from 2002–03 ("Report"). Preliminary information for 2004–05, based on the MLA's counts of positions advertised in the October and December 2004 issues of the *JIL*, suggests that a total of about 1,720 positions will be announced in the English edition in 2004–05, about 11% or 12% above the total for 2003–04. Instead of making across-the-board cuts, some institutions have focused their plans for growth in a limited number of departments as a result of tighter funding, and a few departments in research universities find themselves with increased resources and the prospect of several new hires. Major research universities, all of whom apparently aim to be among the top twenty-five ranked institutions in the next ten years, focused resources in departments that were expected to advance the institution's national reputation. The English department at Texas A&M, for example, advertised five lines in the fall of 2003, and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, advertised four. Louisiana State University announced a plan to hire sixteen new assistant professors over the next three years in an effort to reduce its reliance on non-tenure-track appointments. Brown, Temple, the University of Southern California, and New York University have all announced plans to increase the size of their faculties substantially. Institutions not in the race for higher national ranking were more typically in a holding pattern.

One chair noted that in states where the lawmakers identify with the local institutions, such as Texas, California, and Louisiana, legislatures have been more concerned to protect the public universities than they have in states in the Northeast where lawmakers are more likely to identify with the private, elite universities. The January 2004 *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* newsletter put some data behind this impression. Its study of long-range trends charts the dates at which declining state support for higher education would zero out were current trends to continue. Five of the states in the top ten on the list are Vermont, Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Virginia (Maine, as always, goes its own way and is number 49 on the list) (5).

Salary freezes were mentioned almost as often as hiring freezes, except in institutions that have collective bargaining. A few chairs reported that their institutions have not received salary increases in two years. One institution that had withheld a planned pay increase to cover a deficit recently awarded a midyear salary increase of $600 to all employees to compensate for the increased cost of medical coverage, which has risen sharply during the period of salary stagnation. Union contracts prevented some schools from withdrawing planned salary increases and travel support or changing other aspects of working conditions, such as course load. In general, union contracts limited the institution's flexibility to cut the existing budget except through hiring freezes and cuts to operations. How unionized institutions fare in the 2005–07 contract negotiations could have a significant impact in the overall statistics measuring faculty salary growth as a result of the current economy. If unions succeed in protecting faculty income, it could inspire new unionizing efforts and push administrations on nonunionized campuses to match the rate of increase in unionized schools.

Many chairs reported that they were directed to cancel early any course that did not show a strong enrollment in preregistration. Others offered fewer sections because of lack of budget for temporary faculty members. Still others reported that their institutions shifted costs by attaching fees to more classes. The size of the summer school was reduced on a number of campuses, thereby limiting both curricular opportunities for students and potential additional income for faculty. In most institutions the required first-year writing course provided some protection against deeper cuts in the English department. There was, however, more movement toward outsourcing first-year writing to other schools. English departments in community colleges are primarily geared to provide writing instruction. At many two-year colleges, the service-oriented English department has one of the largest budgets, employs the largest number of faculty members, and enrolls the most students. This role helped such departments weather the cuts better than those whose efforts are more directed to the teaching of literature. Several departments were in the midst of expanding offerings or implementing a new program when the budget picture changed abruptly and those plans had to be suspended or abandoned. A few were in the process of renovations or moving to another building when funding abruptly stopped.

Deferred maintenance and reduced frequency of janitorial services were perhaps the most common first-line items for budget cuts across institutions. Reductions in library budgets most often affected purchases of serials and monographs. At a time of rising costs for serials and the need to enhance the use of electronic research resources, the cuts to libraries are disproportionately damaging to the humanities, since electronic search engines and journal archives for the sciences were among the first put in place in most institutions. In tandem with the impact of cuts to the library budget were cuts to the subsidies to university presses. This pattern of reducing press subsidies, well noted in the letter that 2002 MLA President Stephen Greenblatt sent to all MLA members, was accelerated by new budget reductions. Representatives from the university presses report that these cuts have had a deleterious effect on the number and kinds of books that university presses can afford to publish. Most journals in the field continue to publish, although a few (such as *Shenandoah* and *Kenyon Review*) suffered deep cuts or were eliminated. A few institutions reported that some of their graduate students were unexpectedly left without summer stipends because of summer school reductions, but some of these departments were able to provide some alternative support to assistants left in the lurch.

The impact of shifting the costs of nonacademic functions to academic departments is almost never factored into the discussions about budget cuts, yet it is eroding the capacity of the department to use its operating budget to support academic work. The administrative strategy of shifting costs down to the departments without providing additional resources was accelerated in many institutions. Such cost shifting takes many forms. One is implementing complex electronic personnel record systems that require department staff to perform work once done at the college level. Various forms of maintenance that were once done on a university schedule, such as painting offices, have been placed on a for-fee basis that the department must pay. Port fees for computers, Braille signs for offices, and emergency equipment are some of the random costs that were shifted down to departments as nonacademic areas of the institution sought to cut their budgets.

Budget constraints were also cited as increasing the pressure for accountability on faculty members and departments as a whole. In the last two years, institutions have increasingly imposed quality measures or quality indicators as a way of statistically measuring faculty productivity in an effort to drive productivity at a time of declining resources. Inevitably, the quality measures have relied on numbers, such as number of articles in a ranked list of journals or number of students taught per faculty member. As a discipline English is skeptical of such numbers when separated from assessments of quality of teaching or significance of publications. These pressures can result in a deepening alienation of the faculty from the administration. Within the department, chairs are increasingly expected to be more managerial. In a number of institutions the movement is to redefine the role of chairs on the model of the department head. This pattern is a serious threat to faculty governance and implicitly fatal to the more popular collegial concept of the chair as the first among equals.

Academic Employment and Graduate Education

Among the most difficult questions are those connected with doctoral education and the preparation of future faculty members. Increased income inequality in the wider society has arguably already made itself felt through heightened institutional competition for external research dollars, more selective faculty hiring, and more selective student admissions in a higher education system increasingly ranked and stratified along just these lines. One plausible scenario projects higher education as yet another example of a winner-take-all market, where one or two hundred of the most prestigious institutions out of the more than three thousand that make up American higher education lay claim to the best students (as certified by their higher scores on standardized tests), the best faculties (as attested by the capacity to survive and even thrive under the most demanding regimes of productivity for tenure and promotion), and not coincidentally the lion's share of available resources (in the form of ample endowments, well-honed development and fund-raising machinery, proven records of winning competitive research funding, and the ability that winning on all these counts confers to exact the highest tuition and largest donations from the most advantaged, affluent members of the society). But, as many readers will observe, far from being a recent development, such concentration of financial and human capital in a relatively few elite institutions has long been a feature of American higher education—and a feature notable for the way the wealth of the wealthiest few tends to define ambition for everyone else, whether as institutions or as individual faculty members. What may be more recent, however, is the sense of a hardening of boundaries and distinctions, whereby financial and regulatory constraints will confine institutions more rigidly within station and rank and limit opportunities for students and departments.

With the notable exception of the small group of highly selective private liberal arts colleges, the presence or absence of graduate and especially doctoral programs is widely taken as one significant marker for this boundary, and doctoral education may well be a programmatic area especially vulnerable to distortion as institutions struggle to weather current financial tempests and stresses. Graduate students are poised between their ambition to pursue advanced study according to their own intellectual interests and their commitment to the students they meet in the introductory courses for which they provide so much of the teaching corps in their departments. As a group, graduate students thus stand at the border between elite ambitions and mass education. In the course of their studies and their experience of graduate school, they must somehow work out where in the educational system they want to make, or have any realistic chance of achieving, professionally and personally rewarding careers as teachers and scholars.

A disjunction between the numbers of degree recipients each year and the number who can achieve the goal of employment in a tenure-track position directly after graduation has persisted for three decades. The highly competitive condition of the academic career path is now long-established as fact and expectation. English doctoral programs have awarded doctorates to more than 900 graduates in twenty-one out of the thirty years

1973 to 2003, according to the United States government-sponsored Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). Over the most recent fourteen years, 1990 to 2003, the SED reports more than 900 doctorate recipients in twelve of those years and more than 1,000 in six (Natl. Science Foundation). The MLA estimates that perhaps two-thirds of the positions announced in the *JIL* each year are tenure-track assistant professorships. Competing for these entry-level career positions along with each year's crop of new doctorate recipients are graduates from prior years not yet placed in tenure-track appointments and those who, although placed, seek to move to another institution or location. On the four most recent surveys of PhD placement that the MLA has conducted—covering persons who received doctorate degrees in 1991–92, 1993–94, 1996–97, and 2000–01—tenure-track placements of new degree recipients numbered 491, 411, 400, and 431, respectively (MLA unpublished data). Assuming that two-thirds of the 1,500 to 1,800 positions announced in the *JIL* and that departments fill each year are tenure-track assistant professor positions, these figures indirectly point to the number of placements won by graduates from earlier years, a number that, while not directly countable, must be substantial—half or more of the entry-level positions filled in any given year. The direct evidence of all eleven PhD placement surveys that the MLA has conducted over that twenty-five year period, 1975–76 to 2000–01, indicates a higher education system that is able to assimilate from between 300 to 500 *new* doctorate recipients in English each year to tenure-track positions (Laurence; MLA unpublished data). As John Guillory notes, one effect of this highly competitive market situation is that small differences in candidate qualifications produce large differences in career outcomes (1161).

With the generation of faculty members hired in the 1960s retiring or about to retire, prospects for hiring should be improving, especially at the junior level, even given institutions' difficult financial circumstances. Hypothetically, an accelerated pace of hiring at the assistant professor level is possible, even if institutions hire only one or two assistant professors for every three or four senior faculty members who retire. And, as noted above, the MLA projects that the number of positions advertised in the *JIL* in 2004–05 will be more than 10% greater than the number in 2003–04. Institutional behavior, however, is notoriously difficult to predict, and budget problems can only compound the multiple contingencies at work:

impending retirements that may be delayed because retirement portfolios rest on the vagaries of the stock market

changing institutional budget circumstances and priorities, sometimes favoring hiring to regular faculty appointments instead of temporary or adjunct positions, sometimes the reverse

fluctuating numbers of degree recipients who compete for the tenure-track assistant professor positions that departments seek to fill in any given year. (The historic high of 1,412 degree recipients in English occurred in 1974, the recent low of 669 in 1988; the most recent figures, for 2001, 2002, and 2003 are 977, 968, and 929.)

unpredictability in the chances that in any given year the subfields through which candidates have defined their interests and qualifications will match the subfields in which departments seek to hire

While some English department chairs will have resources to hire and move forward in the next few years, others will not be able to hire as many faculty members as they lose.

The negative effects on graduate education of the financial constraints that concern this report are many and obvious. Consequences include higher workloads for graduate teaching assistants, even longer time-to-degree, and a reduction of graduate course offerings. The ratio of new PhDs to jobs available is unlikely to improve as long as departments rely on large staffs of teaching assistants to offset the decline in the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty members available to teach undergraduate courses, especially the introductory courses many students are required to take in their first and second years of college. The problem of understaffing not only affects graduate students and job candidates but will also have a deleterious effect on higher education generally. Class sizes will increase and instructional quality will further deteriorate. The hiring of adjuncts and nontenured faculty members will accelerate. These are only a few of the most obvious structural consequences that the budget difficulties are likely to cause.

Planning for the Future

If the assumptions of this report about the future of funding for higher education are sound, institutions are unlikely to revert to planning as usual on the past models. The potential for structural change in higher education raises a number of issues that we think members of the profession in general and the ADE in particular should monitor in the next few years:

1. Budget management. In a climate in which state and endowment funding is reduced and new funding may depend on opportunistic and entrepreneurial initiatives, chairs need to be highly skilled in understanding and managing budgets. Yet most chairs receive little or no training in this area. Through its various venues the ADE should help prepare chairs for these kinds of budget challenges. The summer seminars, panels at the MLA convention, the electronic discussion list, and ADE publications are places where such programs may be presented.

2. Tenure and the composition of the faculty. The committee believes that the cumulative effects of changing funding patterns in higher education threaten the tenure system. Two United States Department of Education surveys that collected information about the tenure status of full-time faculty members—the first covering the academic year 1976–77, the second the fall of 2001—confirm the seriousness of this threat. In 1976 56% of full-time faculty members in degree-granting institutions of higher education held tenure; in 2002 the percentage of full-time nonmedical faculty members holding tenure had fallen to 48%. Unfortunately, the Departments of Education's 1977 study (covering the 1976–77 academic year) did not ask institutions to enumerate faculty members at various ranks who did not have tenure so as to distinguish those who were on the tenure track. But it is possible to estimate this figure, or at least its scale, by assuming that in 1976 all those who were not tenured but held appointments at the ranks of assistant, associate, or full professor were on the tenure track.[3] On that assumption, it appears that something on the order of 80% of full-time faculty members in United States degree-granting institutions of higher education either had tenure or occupied professorial-rank appointments leading to tenure in 1976; in four-year institutions the estimated figure is 87%. In 2002, in degree-granting institutions participating in Title IV student aid programs, the proportion of full-time faculty members with tenure or appointments leading to tenure had fallen to 67% in all degree-granting institutions and to 71% in four-year institutions.[4]

The Department of Education's surveys also document institutions' increasing reliance on part-time faculty members. Data from the survey covering the 1976–77 academic year show that in 1976, 69% of faculty members were employed full-time—whether in tenured, tenure-track, or non-tenure-track appointments. A decade later, in 1987, the proportion employed full-time had declined slightly, to 66%. Between 1987 and 2002, however, the proportion of faculty members in part-time positions increased more dramatically, from 34% to 44%, and the share employed full-time fell correspondingly from 66% to 56% (United States, *Employees*). While there were larger numbers of both full-time and part-time faculty members in 2002 than in 1987, the proportion of faculty members employed part-time increased by about 10 percentage points in every sector: four-year and two-year institutions; private and public institutions; institutions that have doctorates, masters, baccalaureate, and associates degrees as their highest offering. The increasing proportion of faculty members employed part-time and in non-tenure-track positions has implications for tenure as we have known it, both in itself and in the context of reductions in the subsidies for university presses. The profession needs to consider alternatives to monograph publication and needs to frame tenure and promotion criteria in the context of an institution's mission and resources.

3. Indirect effects. Budget issues touch almost all aspects of academic practice, and change in one place may play itself out by the law of unintended consequences. For example, cuts in summer school budgets in a number of places resulted in eliminating financial support for graduate students during the summer. Budget pressures can quickly lead curricular decisions in ways that do not reflect good educational sense. Outside funding possibilities tend to direct and distort research initiatives and curriculum change. Enrollment changes, early retirement incentives that prematurely rob departments of senior faculty members, grade inflation to influence teaching evaluations, and economically driven shifts in instructional delivery that run counter to good educational practice are examples indicative of how budget decisions compromise academic integrity. The ADE needs to monitor the consequences of budget cuts beyond the most apparent levels of reducing the size of programs, faculties, and salaries.

4. Faculty governance. Strong faculty participation in institutional decision making will be critical in establishing and maintaining open communication between faculty and administration, transparency in budget processes, and access to data used in strategic planning. Faculty governance can also provide a venue to examine budget problems across disciplines and colleges and to allow for more collaborative faculty actions. Unfortunately, these important changes are occurring at a time when fewer faculty members express an interest in service and administrators are often under such pressure that the processes of faculty governance seem too cumbersome and slow. Faculty members' inclination to ignore service in pursuit of career advancement is especially shortsighted at a time when change may have significant impact on the academic practices fundamental to how we wish to define our career paths. Colleges and universities need to consider ways that faculty governance can be supported and strengthened in a climate that often discourages institutional citizenship as a vital part of professional activity.

5. Faculty hiring and compensation. The most immediate and overt consequences of budget cuts are to faculty compensation, hiring, and workload. Statistics, such as the AAUP salary survey for 2003, show that salary for faculty members increased at the lowest rate in decades in 2003 and that pay increases for faculty members in public institutions are falling behind the pay increases for those in private institutions. Since the majority of faculty members are in public institutions, this trend, if it continues, will have a deleterious effect on compensation across the profession as a whole. Faculty members could lose the growth in economic status experienced over the last twenty-five years. With about 60% of all faculty members off the tenure track now, predictable increases in the number of non-tenure-track faculty appointments will further diminish total faculty compensation. The consequences of such trends potentially will affect morale, graduate education, the protections of academic freedom and tenure, and the quality of American higher education in general.

6. Access, cost, and quality. Budget cuts have already driven up tuition costs and could narrow access to higher education. Especially at risk are growing sectors of the public that have not traditionally had access to higher education. Failure to continue to provide quality education to a broad range of the public will deepen social, educational, and economic divisions in our society. Changes in public education that result in downgrading quality and increasing costs will shortchange the opportunities for success through education of the next generation.

The Role of the Chair

More than ever chairs need to understand the organizational structures of the institution and how they work. The role of the chair can be critical to how well a department weathers cuts without such deep losses that programs and faculty morale are seriously damaged. Most budget cuts come down to the department level, and chairs should insist on having a role in budget decisions under discussion by the administration. Chairs need to be in the conversation, and the process by which decisions will be made needs to be transparent to both administrators and faculty members. In a well-governed institution with good faculty governance, forums and procedures should already be in place for determining budget reductions. Chairs need to be clear what those procedures are and what opportunities they provide for influencing, or protesting, plans for budget reductions. If such procedures are not already in place, the existing structures of faculty governance should immediately insist on drafting such procedures. Many institutions have such documents in place, and the ADE or the AAUP can provide some guidance about what such documents should contain.

Ideally, the chair is a partner in the institution's academic decision making, not just the person in the middle between administration and faculty. Administrators at all levels know that they need the buy in of others to make administrative decisions succeed, and the support of the chairs of the largest departments can be crucial to managing budget cuts successfully. Casting oneself as a partner rather than an officer in a chain of command is a way to exercise a chair's power. Since English departments are typically one of the largest departments on campus, if not the largest, English department chairs are often campus leaders who can exercise considerable influence. Building on that position by making common cause with other chairs can strengthen that influence. Budget reductions to an English department are usually just part of the picture of reductions to the college's budget. Chairs may find that the dean of the college is an ally since the dean may well be trying to protect the college's budget, too. Chairs who understand how decisions on their campus are made may find ways to help their colleagues in other departments and their dean while also serving the best interests of their department.

Within the department the processes by which the chair makes difficult budget decisions need to be equally transparent to the members of the faculty. Since faculty members are not routinely involved in setting or managing budgets, presenting to the department the nature of the budget and how it works may require clear talk and patience. The internal controls on budget categories and use of funds vary widely among institutions. Some chairs have control of the entire budget, including salary lines, while others control little more than some operating funds. How large one's budget is and how much of it is fungible will determine a department's potential flexibility in managing the budget. It is critical that chairs know how to both articulate and quantify their needs. Institutions typically have restrictions about how certain parts of the budget may be used, and chairs who understand budgeting practices and how to use them will attain the maximum flexibility from their resources. It is equally critical that the department's faculty works with the chair to determine departmental priorities on the budget and the costs and consequences of proposed cuts. Since cuts inevitably mean that some programs or persons will have less, chairs will need to work with their departments to articulate how selective cuts can still protect the best interest of the whole. Although faculty members are notorious for resisting change, open discussions that lay out clearly the options and the necessities provide opportunities to express frustration and to prepare to accept change. The chair is the essential conduit of reason and information who mediates between the differing faculty interests inside the department and the larger institution. While unprotesting acceptance of cuts may make it easier for administrators to cut further and deeper in the future, chairs who too hastily decide on unyielding resistance as the best strategy may hurt their departments and throw away their best chance to control damage or win other kinds of support that can be gained through working with the larger interests of the college. A wise chair knows when to resist and when to adapt.

Financial constraint creates a climate in which departments need to think collectively about their identity and aspirations. When budgets are tight, planning often becomes opportunistic. Departments need to know what kinds of opportunities they can use, what their program priorities are, and what aspects of their programs they must be prepared to defend. Deans will ask departments to justify requests in terms of programs, and chairs who frame program initiatives in ways that mesh with the institution's agenda stand a better chance of moving ahead. It is important for the faculty to have agreed on its plans and priorities so that the chair can speak confidently and consistently when presenting to the dean the department's goals and needs. Every contact a chair has with the administration should be exploited for its potential to yield information that can guide the department's planning and put it in a position to take immediate advantage of whatever opportunities become available.

Departments that know their strengths and how to make them function to support the institution's agenda improve the chances that they will be protected from damaging cuts. Departments gain advantage in their institutions to the extent that they are known for providing critically valued services and resources. Higher education operates in a prestige economy in which reputation is the coin of the realm, and prestige will be defined in both local and national contexts. The economy of prestige, however construed in different institutions, can provide a bulwark against cuts. Administrators facing budget limitations will weigh carefully the quality of research and teaching they will get for their investments. Chairs should arm themselves with data and strategies to document their departments' value. It is a truism that investors seek to invest in programs that are already successful. The competitive nature of the economy of prestige has resulted in some departments' being selected for significant new investment by administrators who were making deep cuts to other areas. Given the forecast of an extended period of tight budgets, highly selective investment is likely to be increasingly implemented, even at institutions that freeze salaries and hiring or impose other cuts.

Leading departments in a time of fiscal constraint is difficult and stressful work. Chairs face contradictory imperatives to defend their departments' position while keeping in mind other institutional perspectives that will influence the deans' decisions. When funding is inadequate, much more of a chair's time is spent on budget, development, and personnel. Department morale can suffer as destructive anger erodes the department's collegiality. The ADE electronic discussion list and especially the summer seminars offer chairs sites for discussion of their mutual problems and for sharing of successful strategies. A climate of budget austerity will discourage many faculty members from taking on chair duties that have become more time-consuming and stressful than ever before, but chairs who manage to hold the department together or build its strength in the face of difficult change may find the satisfaction worth the struggle.

The profession is facing a prolonged period of budget constraint. The exigencies of limited budgets will reshape many of the practices and policies of the last forty years. Vigilance and imagination will be required if we are to preserve and build on what is best in American higher education. The autonomy to shape our discipline is at stake, as are access and opportunity for students. The importance of English as an area of study will place our departments at the center of the disciplines most affected by the evolving economy of higher education. Strong, creative, and well-informed chairs can have a significant impact on the well-being of their departments and the structural changes affecting higher education.

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Notes

[1]See, e.g., "As College Costs Go Up."

[2]The Center for the Study of Education Policy, at Illinois State University, has conducted these annual surveys of funding for higher education for forty-five years. The figures are reported annually in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as "State Appropriations for Higher Education." The data in this discussion were compiled from the reports and from articles about the data written by Schmidt; Arnone; and Hebel.

[3]The data for 1976 were originally collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in its survey *Employees in Institutions of Higher Education, 1976–77*. These data are made available by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the data file was downloaded from the Web site of the International Archive of Education Data, which is operated by the ICPSR. The data for 2002 are from the Employees by Assigned Position (EAP) component of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which collected information about numbers of full- and part-time faculty members whom institutions employed as of 1 November 2002 and about the tenure status of full-time faculty members. The data for 1987 are from the 1987 IPEDS Fall Staff survey, which collected information about numbers of full- and part-time faculty members institutions employed as of 1 November 1987—but not about the tenure status of full-time faculty members. The EAP 2002 and IPEDS Fall Staff 1987 data files were downloaded from the "IPEDS Dataset Cutting Tool" area of the NCES Web site (United States).

The assumption that in 1976 all those who were not tenured but held appointments at the ranks of assistant, associate, or full professor were on the tenure track clearly overestimates the number of full-time faculty members at the professorial ranks who were on the tenure track. However, the 1977 study found that 46% of the 59,630 faculty members of undesignated rank had tenure, and it seems reasonable to assume that some substantial portion of the remaining 54% were on the tenure track. The overestimate of tenure-track faculty members at the three professorial ranks is thus offset by the underestimate of tenure-track faculty members of undesignated rank.

[4]The 2002 percentages are based on a total of 584,821 full-time faculty members—275,355 tenured faculty members, 114,801 not tenured but on the tenure track, and 194,665 not tenured and not on the tenure track. See table 8 in Knapp et al.

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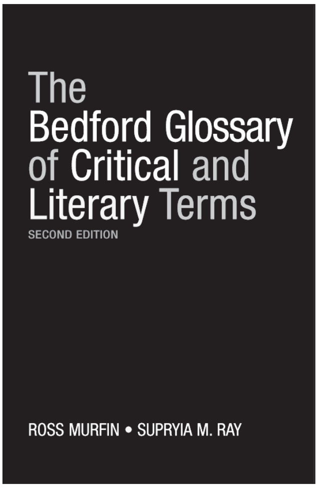

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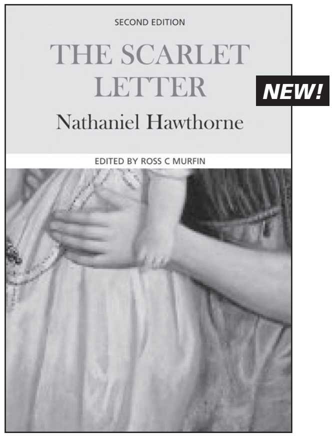

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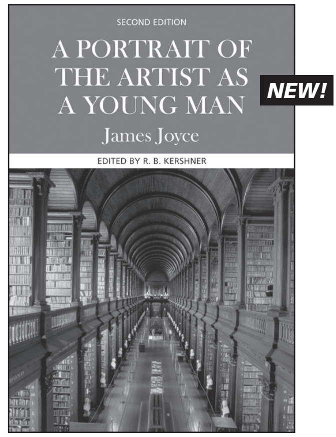

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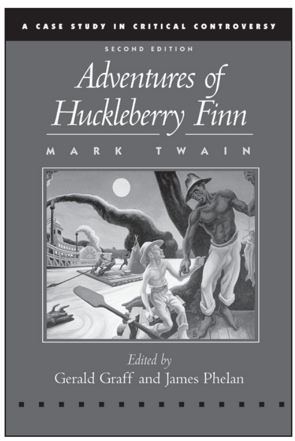

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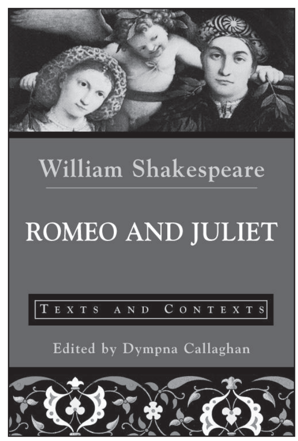

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