Public Policy and Higher Education

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Course Overview

The overview includes an introduction to the course, guidelines on grading, and required texts.

Introduction

This course has the following goals, (roughly) in the following order:

- To provide students with experience in crafting policy solutions, including the means by which to frame a policy solution.

- To familiarize students with the major issues currently facing higher education at the policy level.

- To provide the student with a working knowledge of the organization and structure of governance of higher education at the state and federal level.

- To acquaint the student with major theories of the policy process in the American state.

- To familiarize students with data sources of use to policy analysts.

Most colleges in the United States began as public or quasi-public institutions. Government oversight over these institutions tended to take the form of benign neglect. The first transition for the relationship between government and higher education occurred as a result of the Supreme Court's decision that Dartmouth was a private institution, not subject to state governance. Following the Dartmouth case, a clear distinction between public and private institutions was drawn. Government oversight over higher education from this point on tended to take the form of establishing public colleges and universities, and appointing members of public boards to represent the interests of the public.

Until the middle of the 20th century, the interest of government in higher education was relatively limited. States had an interest in ensuring that a sufficient supply of professionals would be available, while the federal government had a broad interest in encouraging research and technological development. During this long period of development, the tradition of autonomy of institutions of higher education, both public and private, was strengthened.

The rapid increase in technological and knowledge-based industries since the middle part of the twentieth century changed American higher education's relationship with American society. First, the increased payoff to higher education meant that many more people attended college, shifting the system from a narrow one to a mass system of higher education, now on its way to becoming a universal system of higher education. Second, the increased demand for technological advancement gave the federal government a strong incentive to utilize colleges and universities as a center for research and development.

Higher education as an industry responded to both of these challenges well, providing much more access than previously and responding to government incentives by developing the world's pre-eminent research universities. Public higher education in particular developed very rapidly during the time period from 1945-1980, with institutions being built and expanded by state governments. Most state policymakers assumed during this time period that support for higher education's development would be sufficient to ensure that it would serve its societal role. However, the challenges of this time period meant that many states put in place the first systems of governance of higher education, meant to coordinate the efforts of the states' systems of higher education and ensure that institutions were meeting some public needs.

We are now in the middle of a third transition in public policy for higher education. States are no longer in a financial or a organizational sense able to maintain their roles as owner-operators of public higher education. Nor are states able to maintain historical financial or relationships with private institutions of higher education. The federal government finds itself in the same situation, unable in particular to keep up with the rapidly increasing costs of higher education. Instead, state and federal policymakers find themselves in the paradoxical position of *needing* higher education more—due to the increased importance of a college degree–and being able less able to directly *control* the systems of higher education in their state. In this class, we will discuss how states might balance their own priorities and this new relationship with higher education in order to ensure that colleges and universities meet societal goals.

Grading

Evaluation for the course will be based on the following factors:

  Policy memos: 75%

  Participation: (Questions for class, participation in and out of class): 25%

Policy Memos for this class, you will write three policy memos, each of which can be between 1500 and 2000 words, with additional tables and figures. Each policy memo will be worth 25%

of your overall grade. The expectations for each policy memo will be described in our class meetings and posted on our Blackboard webpage.

Schedule for Policy Memos

February 21 First Policy Memo Due

March 27 Second Policy Memo Due

April 17 Third Policy Memo Due

Participation: Your attendance and participation in the course is vital. There are many ways to participate in the course, including attentive listening and incisive writing outside of class. As part of your participation in class, each student should submit through our blackboard webpage a set of questions regarding the week's readings the day before class meets (Thursday night). The two or three questions should cover areas that you would like to more know about, did not understand, or reflect some critique of one or more of the works for that week. I will review these questions and incorporate them into our class discussions.

Honor Code

All assignments for this class are to be conducted under the obligations set out in Vanderbilt's Honor Code. Students are to do their own work and to cite their sources appropriately. Please click here to review the honor code.

Readings

All readings below are linked. To acccess readings on blackboard, go to our course webpage. Some readings, such as those linking to JSTOR, will require off-campus users to log in to the Vanderbilt library webiste and download the publication from there. All of the publications listed are available to Vanderbilt students through their access to library resources.

Schedule for Meetings

The schedule for all class meetings is as follows:

Friday, January 29

Introduction and Context

Goldin, C. and Katz, L. F. (2008). *The Race Between Education and Technology*, chapter Mass Higher Education in the Twentieth Century, pages 247–286. The Balknap Press of Harvard University Press blackboard

Federal Agenda for Higher Education

Hillary Clinton: New College Compact

    Jeb Bush: Restoring the Right to Rise Through a Quality Education

    Jeb Bush's Plan to Help Students Pay for College

    White House: Fact Sheet on President's Plan for Higher Education

Saturday, January 30

The Eightfold Path for Policy Analysis

Bardach, E. (2005). *A practical guide for policy analysis: The eightfold path to more effective problem solving*. CQ Press Washington, DC E-book, you will need to log in with your vunet id Part 1 only

Theories of the policy process: Policy typologies

Lowi, T. J. (1964). American business, public policy, case studies and political theory. *World Politics*, 16(4):677–715 Online

Debates in higher education policy: The Access Agenda

Kane, T. J. (1999). Has financial aid policy succeeded in ensuring access to college? In *The Price of Admission*, pages 88–127. Brookings, Washington, DC blackboard

Theories of the policy process: Incrementalism

Lindblom, C. E. (1959). The science of "Muddling through". *Public Administration Review*, 19(2):79–88 Online

Debates in higher educaiton policy: Reimagining Financial Aid

Doyle, W. R. (2013). A new partnership:reshaping the federal and state commitment to need-based aid. Technical report, Committee for Economic Development, Washington, DC Online

Debates in higher education policy: The student loan debate

Chapman, B. (2005). Income contingent loans for higher education: International reform. Technical report, Australian National University Center for Economic Policy Research Online

Dillon, E. (2011). Affordable at last: Affordable at last: A new student loan system. Technical report, Education Sector, Washington, DC Online

Theories of the policy process: Postmodern Theories

Schneider, A. and Ingram, H. (1993). Social construction of target populations- implications for politics and policy. *American Political Science Review*, 87(2):334–347 Online

Stone, D. A. (2002). *Policy paradox: the art of political decision making*. Norton, New York blackboard

Debates in higher education policy: Student Success

Turner, S. (2004). Going to college and finishing college: Explaining different educational outcomes. In *College Choices: The Economics of Where to Go, When to Go, and How to Pay for It*. University of Chicago Press blackboard

Lumina Strategy Labs

Read all three sections: improve student outcomes, align investments, create smarter pathways.

Friday, February 26

State Policy and Higher Education: Connecting States and Campuses

Glenny, L. A. (1959). *Autonomy of public colleges: The challenge of coordination*. McGraw-Hill blackboard

Richardson, R., Bracco, K. R., Callan, P., and Finney, J. (1999). *Designing State Higher Education Systems for a New Century*. ACE/Oryx Press, Phoenix blackboard

Richardson, R. C. (2009). *Policy and Performance in American Higher Education: An Examination of Cases Across State Systems*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore blackboard

Theories of the policy process: Systems Theory

Dye, T. R. (1969). Executive power and public policy in the states. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 22(4):926–939 Online

State Policy and Higher Education: Current research and the State of the Field

McLendon, M. K. (2003). The politics of higher education: Toward an expanded research agenda. *Educational Policy*, 17(1):165–191 Online

McLendon, M. K., Hearn, J. C., and Mokher, C. G. (2009). Partisans, professionals, and power: The role of political factors in state higher education funding. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(6):686–713 Online

Assignments:

First policy memo due February 21, midnight

Questions due Thursday, February 25, midnight

Saturday, February 27

Theories of the policy process: Rational Choice Theory

Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. Harper, New York, blackboard

Suggested Reading:

Meltzer, A. H. and Richards, S. (1981). A rational theory of the size of government. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 89(5):914–927 Online

Debates in higher education policy: State financing of higher education

Hansen, W. L. and Weisbrod, B. A. (1969). The distribution of costs and direct benefits of public higher education: The case of california. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 4(2):176–191 Online

Doyle, W. R. (2007). The political economy of redistribution through higher education subsidies. In Smart, J. C., editor, *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, volume XXII, pages 335–410. Springer, New York blackboard

Theories of the policy process: Cultural Theories

Elazar, D. (1966). *American Federalism: A View From the States*. Harper and Row, New York blackboard

Sugggested Readings

Sharkansky, I. (1969). The utility of elazar's political culture: A research note. *Polity*, 2(1):66–83 Online

Wirt, F., Mitchell, D., and Marshall, C. (1988). Culture and education policy: Analyzing values in state policy systems. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 10(4):271–284 Online

Debates in higher education policy: College affordability—the state role

Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (2003). Policies in sync: Appropriations, financial aid and financing for higher education. Technical report, Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, Boulder, CO Online

Theories of the policy process: Neo-institutionalism

Moe, T. (1984). The new economics of organization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 28(4):739–777 Online

Debates in higher education policy: Accountability and Performance funding

Dougherty, K. and Natow, R. (2009). The demise of higher education performance funding systems in three states. Technical report, Community College Research Center, New York, NY Online

Dougherty, K. J., Jones, S. M., Lahr, H., Natow, R., Pheatt, L., and Reddy, V. (2013). Envisioning performance funding impacts: The espoused theories of action for state higher education performance funding in three states. Unpublished Manuscript Online

HCM: Driving outcomes

Tandberg, D. and Hillman, N. (2013). State performance funding for higher education: Silver bullet or red herring? Technical report, Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education, Madison, WI Online

Debates in higher education policy: developmental education

America, C. C. (2012). Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere. Technical report, Complete College America, Washington, DC Online

CCRC: Improving the Accuracy of Remedial Placement

MDRC: Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for Developmental Education Students

Debates in higher education policy: Creating a seamless P-16 system

Callan, P. M., Finney, J. E., Kirst, M. W., Usdan, M. D., and Venezia, A. (2006). Claiming common ground: State policymaking for improving college readiness and success. *San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education* Online

Venezia, A. and Kirst, M. W. (2005). Inequitable opportunities: How current education systems and policies undermine the chances for student persistence and success in college. *Educational Policy*, 19(2):283 Online

Debates in higher education policy: Competency-Based Education

Shedd, J. M. (2003). The history of the student credit hour. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2003(122):5–12 Online

Wellman, J. V. and Ehrlich, T. (2003). The credit hour: The tie that binds. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2003(122):119–122 Online

Klein-Collins, R. and Baylor, E. (2013). Meeting students where they are. Technical report, Center for American Progress and Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, Washington, DCOnline

Friday, April 1

Debates in higher education policy: Accountability for learning outcomes

Miller, M. A. and Ewell, P. T. (2005). Measuring up on college level learning. Technical report, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education Online

NILOA:Knowing what students know and can do

Recommended

Bassis: A Primer on the Transformation of Higher Education in America

Assignments

Second Policy Memo due March 27, midnight

Questions for class due March 31, midnight

Saturday, April 2

Topics:

Debates in higher education policy: The Role of Technology and the Demise of Higher Education as We Know It

Carey, K. (2012). The siege of academe. *Washington Monthly* Online

Christensen, C., Horn, M. B., and Soares, L. C. L. (2012). Disrupting college how disruptive innovation can deliver quality and affordability to postsecondary education. Technical report, The New America Foundation, Washington, DC Online

Debates in higher education policy: Accountability for productivity

Kelly, P. J. and Jones, D. P. (2005). A new look at the institutional component of higher education finance: A guide for evaluating performance relative to financial resources. Technical report, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems Online

Kelly, P. J. (2009). The dreaded p word: An examination of productivity in public postsecondary education. Technical report, Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs, Productivty and Accountability Online

Lumina Foundation (2011). Four steps to finishing first. Technical report, Lumina Foundation, Indianapolis, INOnline

Also, take a look at the College Productivity Website, a production of Lumina foundation.

Debates in higher education policy: Accountability—breaking the Iron Triangle

Immerwahr, J., Johnson, J., and Gasbarra, P. (2008). The iron triangle: College presidents talk about costs, access, and quality. national center report# 08-2. Technical report, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education Online

Kirwan, W. E. (2007). Top to bottom reengineering: University system of maryland enhances productivity, improves accountability, and maintains quality. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2007(140):41–49 Online

Twigg, C. A. (2005). Increasing success for underserved students. Technical report, National Center for Academic Transformation, Saratoga Springs, NY Online

Assignments

Third Policy Memo due April 17, midnight