

2. STATE GOVERNANCE REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION: PATTERNS, TRENDS, AND THEORIES OF THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS¹

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The American campus-state relationship typically is cast in terms of a fundamental, even paradoxical, tension between the dual demands of *institutional autonomy* and *public accountability*, or between the university's right to regulate its affairs from within and the state's authority (and responsibility) to regulate the university's affairs from without (Bailey, 1975; Berdahl, 1971; Carnegie Foundation, 1982; Glenny and Schmidtlein, 1983; Graham, 1989; Hines, 1988; Millet, 1982; Mortimer and McConnell, 1982; Newman, 1987; Volkwein, 1987). Because neither absolute autonomy of the campus from the state nor complete accountability of the campus to the state is likely to be feasible, the vexing question confronting policymakers is where, precisely, the line should be drawn between campus and state. The dominant pattern of the twentieth century was one of increasing involvement and intervention by state governments in the higher education sector. A large volume of literature has amassed around the interactions between higher education and state governments, focusing particularly on the development and functioning of different governance arrangements for higher education and on the effects of these different arrangements upon various institutional and state policy outcomes.

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A growing literature also exists on recent efforts to reform state higher education governance² patterns. In contrast with the uniform movement toward state-level centralization of higher education in the immediate post-World War II era, the 1980s–1990s represented a period of frenetic and diverse change in the campus–state relationship. From 1985 to 2000, state governments debated in excess of 100 proposals to reform the structural, functional, and authority patterns of their higher education systems (Marcus, 1997; McGuinness, 1994; McLendon and Ness, 2001). The nature of these reform initiatives ranged in scope from relatively narrow alterations in state fiscal and administrative control to the large-scale restructuring of multicampus systems and of statewide coordinating structures. Centralization of decision authority at the state level remained a prominent theme during the period, but “decentralization” and “deregulation” of higher education emerged as important countertrends.

Although an appreciable literature continues to accumulate in description of state governance reform (Hines, 1988; MacTaggart, 1996, 1998; Marcus, 1997; Marcus, Pratt and Stevens, 1997; McGuinness, 1995; McLendon, 2000a,b; McLendon and Ness, 2001; Novak, 1996; Volkwein, 1986a,b, 1989), virtually nothing is known about how or why state governments undertake reforms of their higher education systems. Alternatively stated, little scholarship of either a conceptual or empirical nature exists on the processes of state-level policymaking to reform higher education governance patterns. Consequently, provocative questions about governance policymaking remain largely ignored: given all the other important issues to which state governments might attend, how and why does higher education governance reform emerge as a topic of serious debate among policymakers? Where do ideas to reform the campus–state relationship come from? Why do some proposals succeed in passage, while others fail? Are there discernible patterns in governance policymaking across the states? Or, is such policymaking entirely idiosyncratic, owing to unique (non-repeatable) intersections of social and political phenomena particular to the state and to the reform episode?

The scholarly neglect with respect to governance reform questions reflects a more fundamental deficiency of the extant literature: a general

² The chapter employs the term “state governance” to refer to the different ways in which states have organized their respective systems of higher education, and authority patterns within those systems. The term governance reform refers to changes in those various structural and authority arrangements by state governments. “Restructuring” and “reorganization” are terms also found in the literature.

lack of systematic conceptualization and analysis of state policymaking for higher education. While scholars of K-12 education have derived and adapted from political science a variety of theoretical frameworks to help explain state policymaking in their own arena of activity (Clune, 1987; Fowler, 1994; Mawhinney, 1993; Mazzoni, 1991), higher education researchers have made little effort to systematically identify, simplify, and arrange the complex of interactions and relationships attending higher education policymaking in the states. Indeed, only a handful of studies have explicitly examined state policymaking as it involves higher education (Crosson, 1984; deGive and Olswang, 1999; Frost, Hearn and Marine, 1997; McLendon, 2000b; Olivas, 1984; Van Der Slik, 1999).

This gap in the higher education literature base is particularly glaring because theory and research on public policymaking have accelerated in recent years (Dodd and Jillson, 1994; Sabatier, 1999a,b,c), offering applied policy researchers (such as higher education specialists) a rich array of theoretical perspectives with which to frame investigation of complex policy phenomena. Whereas two decades ago, students of public policymaking were restricted to a rather narrow range of theoretical perspectives, the number and variety of such perspectives available to researchers has grown considerably in recent years.³

This chapter integrates the literature on state governance of higher education with contemporary theories of public policymaking in order to generate initial conceptualization about higher education governance reform in the states. The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section reviews the literature on the campus-state relationship. A large volume of literature exists on the role of the states in higher education, but few comprehensive syntheses have been undertaken. Therefore, the first section of the chapter (1) examines the historical antecedents of the American campus-state relationship, (2) identifies the mechanisms of state governmental control over higher education in the post-World War II era, (3) reviews seminal studies on the campus-state relationship, (4) assesses what is known about the effects of state regulation of higher education, and (5) identifies recent trends in governance reform. The second section describes the development and essential features of three prominent

³ Among the prominent contemporary perspectives attracting major treatment are punctuated-equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991, 1993), revised garbage can theory (Kingdon, 1984, 1995), policy innovation and diffusion theories (Berry and Berry, 1999; Gray, 1973, 1994; Walker, 1969), advocacy coalition theory (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, 1999), and institutional rational choice theories (Kiser and Ostrom, 1982; Ostrom, 1999).

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