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, in (roughly) 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 system of higher education. In this class, we will discuss how state and federal policymakers might structure 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 assignments: 75%

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

Policy Assignments: You will develop a policy proposal over the course of three assignments. Each assignment will be between 1500 and 2000 words, with additional tables and figures.

Each policy assignment will be worth 25% of your overall grade. The expectations for each policy assignment will be described in our class meetings and posted on our class webpage.

Schedule for Policy Assignments

February 12 First Policy Assignment Due

March 5 Second Policy Assignment Due

April 23 Third Policy Assignment 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 course 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. These questions must be submitted using the online form– do not submit a word document. I will review these questions and incorporate them into our class discussions. I expect all students to come to class prepared to discuss the readings– I will call on individuals to either summarize or to respond to the readings.

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 access 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 website 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 and Readings

Friday, January 27

Topics for this weekend: The Role of Policy in Ensuring Student Access and Success

Assignments:

Questions due Thursday, January 26

Introduction and Context

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

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

Oreopoulos, P. and Petronijevic, U. (2013). Making college worth it: A review of the returns to higher education. *The Future of Children*, 23(1):41–65 Online

Saturday, January 28

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 education 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: 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

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.

Flores, Stella M.and Oseguera, L. (2013). Public policy and higher education attainment in a twenty-first-century racial demography: Examining research from early childhood to the labor market. In Paulsen, M. B., editor, *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research: Volume 28*, pages 513–560. Springer Netherlands, Dordrecht Blackboard

Friday, February 24

Topics for this weekend: The role of Policy in the Finance and Governance of Higher Education

Assignments:

First policy assignment due February 12, midnight

Questions due Thursday, February 23, midnight

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

Politics of State Governance of Higher Education

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

Saturday, February 25

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 Chapter 4 Blackboard

Suggested 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: Finance of Higher Education– the systems perspective

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

Snyder, M. (2015). Driving better outcomes: Typology and principles to inform outcomes-based funding models. Technical report, HCM Strategists, Washington, DC Online

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

Friday, April 7

Topics for this weekend: Role of Policy in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Assignments

Second Policy Assignment due March 5, midnight

Questions for class due April 6, midnight

Third Policy Assignment due April 23, midnight

Theories of the policy process: Polycentric Governance

Ostrom, E. (2009) Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems. Nobel Prize Lecture, available: Online.

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

Theories of the Policy Process: Agenda Setting

Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies.* Little Brown, Boston Blackboard

Debates in higher education policy: developmental education

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

Scott-Clayton, J. and Stacey, G. W. (2015). Improving the accuracy of remedial placement. Technical report, Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center, New York, NY Online

Scrivener, S., Weiss, M. J., Ratledge, A., Rudd, T., Sommo, C., and Fresques, H. (2015). Doubling graduation rates: Three-year effects of CUNY's accelerated study in associate programs (ASAP) for developmental education students. Technical report, MDRC, New York, NY Online

Saturday, April 8

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

Shavelson, R. J. (2007). Assessing student learning responsibility: From history to an audacious proposal. *Change*, 39(1):26 – 33 Online

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (2016). Higher education quality: Why documenting learning matters. Technical report, NILOA, Urbana, IL Online

Recommended

Kuh, G. D., Jankowski, N., Ikenberry, S. O., and Kinzie, J. (2014). Knowing what students know and can do: The current state of student learning outcomes assessment in us colleges and universities. Technical report, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)., Urbana, IL Online

Bassis, M. (2015). A primer on the transformation of higher education in America. Technical report, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, Urbana, IL 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, DC Online

Kelchen, R. (2015). The landscape of competency-based education: Enrollments, demographics, and affordability. Technical report, American Enterprise Instutute, Washington, DC Online

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

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