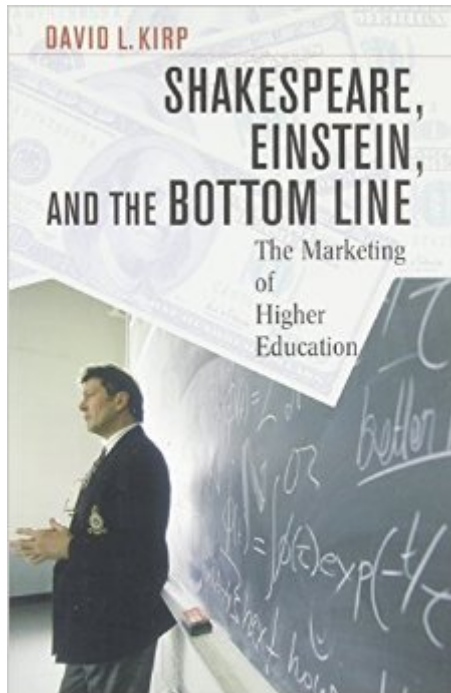


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Shakespeare, Einstein, And The Bottom Line: The Marketing Of Higher Education



Synopsis

How can you turn an English department into a revenue center? How do you grade students if they are "customers" you must please? How do you keep industry from dictating a university's research agenda? What happens when the life of the mind meets the bottom line? Wry and insightful, *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line* takes us on a cross-country tour of the most powerful trend in academic life today--the rise of business values and the belief that efficiency, immediate practical usefulness, and marketplace triumph are the best measures of a university's success. With a shrewd eye for the telling example, David Kirp relates stories of marketing incursions into places as diverse as New York University's philosophy department and the University of Virginia's business school, the high-minded University of Chicago and for-profit DeVry University. He describes how universities "brand" themselves for greater appeal in the competition for top students; how academic super-stars are wooed at outsized salaries to boost an institution's visibility and prestige; how taxpayer-supported academic research gets turned into profitable patents and ideas get sold to the highest bidder; and how the liberal arts shrink under the pressure to be self-supporting. Far from doctrinaire, Kirp believes there's a place for the market--but the market must be kept in its place. While skewering Philistinism, he admires the entrepreneurial energy that has invigorated academe's dreary precincts. And finally, he issues a challenge to those who decry the ascent of market values: given the plight of higher education, what is the alternative?

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press (September 30, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674016343

ISBN-13: 978-0674016347

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.8 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #338,415 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #164 in [Books > Education & Teaching > Schools & Teaching > Funding](#) #170 in [Books > Business & Money > Marketing & Sales > Public Relations](#) #248 in [Books > Textbooks > Education > Educational Philosophy](#)

Customer Reviews

What an engaging book, neat anecdotes abound. Each chapter presents a case study of some kind

to show the sorts of adjustments colleges and universities make to gain and maintain competitive advantage. Much has been written of the packaging of students for display and evaluation by university admissions committees. This book explores the opposite end. Kirp shows how NYU wooed the finest analytic philosophers money can buy in order to gain top students and international reputation, how many public universities are rethinking their commitments to their charter states as the tax-based funding dwindles, and how schools such as DeVry, Phoenix, and many two-year colleges now fill a niche offering IT certification, practical courses most universities choose to ignore. One of my favorite chapters exhibits the cooperation of several small southern liberal arts colleges in an effort to maximize the utility of the internet and defy the complications of location to offer a world class education in the Classics. The chapter on the University of Chicago's efforts to market itself by emphasizing the rigors and intensity of its offerings at the expense of its reputation as a party school provides some humorous moments. Kirp seems to know all of the people he needs to know to get the stories straight and compelling. From the brainstorming of catchy college name to the purchase of science departments by the funding dollar, public and private, Kirp explores the variety of decisions, the successes and failures of faculty involvement, and the remarkable institutional overhauls that occur while remaining solvent and functional. Money changes everything for the college and university.

This informative and provocative book is presented as a series of case studies. They cover a quite comprehensive set of issues and institutions. Among schools mentioned or treated in depth are U of Chicato, Dickinson College, NYU, New York Law School, USC, U Michigan, UVA, Columbia, MIT, Rhodes College in Memphis, the British "Open University," the University of CA (various campuses), the University of Phoenix, and DeVry University (the last two are for-profits). The problems faced by these various schools -- raising operating funds, preserving their missions, collaborating with private industry, surviving a ratings-driven admissions process, adapting to and exploiting technology -- are issues that each institution faces in ways that are both distinctive and overlapping. The case-study method permits exploration of the complexities of the higher education landscape without reductiveness. The method, however, does have its drawbacks. Too many issues (for instance, the role of technology) circle around repeatedly, so one starts to feel issue-fatigue. Also, the case study method attempts to "tell a story," often featuring personalities. The approach borrows a lot from the "New Journalism." For example, here is the opening sentence of Chapter 3: "For William Durden, the peripatetic president of Dickinson College, the October 5, 2001, issue of the Wall Street Journal contained some very good news." Well, maybe that gets a reader to want to keep going (actually, it

turns me off), but it also suggests a focus on individuals and their impact on the places where they work, not on the abstract patterns to be found in the problems they confront.

This is an excellent analysis of the current state of affairs in higher education. The book includes 14 chapters including the conclusion. Each chapter can be read independently, as they follow the famed Harvard case study method. Each chapter describes a unique issue impacting higher education. Some of these interesting issues include: a) the advent and so far failing of online higher education; b) the success of for profit publicly traded university companies; c) the new sources of funds for universities, including copyrights and patents; d) the ongoing restructuring of undergraduate core curriculum to please the students and private industry; e) the shrinking government subsidization of public universities and their resulting de facto privatization; f) the compromising of the independence of university research when financed by the private sector; and f) various attempts to revive the liberal arts discipline within an increasingly profit driven higher education culture. Throughout these issues, the authors covers recurring themes. These include the many conflict of interest between: a) intellectual culture and profits; b) professors' research activities and undergraduate teaching; c) practical job oriented education and liberal arts. Some of these fascinating themes beg the questions of what is knowledge? What is culture? Even what is critical thinking? During the Renaissance the answer to such questions would include being fluent in both Latin and Greek in addition to a couple of vernacular languages. It also entailed having an extremely developed art appreciation supported by demonstrated artistic capabilities. A broad and deep understanding of most aspects of science was also important.

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