

Inventing the University of the Future

***Arnoud De Meyer
President SMU
July 29, 2012
AAPBS Conference***

Overview

- **Taking stock:** five obsolete founding principles and four drivers for change
- **Some propositions**
- **SMU as an experiment**

*Caveat: for the sake of discussion I will paint a picture in **Black and White***

Current Universities are based on five (obsolete) principles

- 1. Our research universities are based on the German nineteenth century model developed by Von Humboldt (who built on the principles formulated by Kant in 1798):**
 - Research is organized by scientific discipline
 - Education is a by-product aimed at grooming the elite for the nation state
 - Universities are semi-autonomous and managed through peer evaluation
- 2. We take students between 18 and 28 years old**
- 3. The universities are autonomous and mainly dedicated to work on 'high' science, which is assumed to precede technology development and application**
- 4. Information is scarce and concentrated in and monopolized by Institutions of Higher Learning and Research**
- 5. Governments gave universities a monopoly on granting degrees**

Why are these principles obsolete?

1. **The more interesting research today is often the result of a combination of several disciplines:** e.g. the merger of chemical and bio-engineering in Cambridge; the success of research on smart infrastructure maintenance
2. **Knowledge is evolving much faster than in the past and is doubling every 7 years:** therefore a degree cannot be a license for life any more
3. - **Society requires our research to be relevant and to address large societal issues:** e.g. Kenneth Freeman (Boston U.)' s emphasis on health care and life sciences, digital technology, and alternative energy and sustainability in order to compete with MIT Sloan and HBS.
- **Science and technology and application co-evolve and enrich each other and are not in a linear sequence**
4. **Internet has made information largely free, abundant, overloading, and its flow is not limited by geographical and organizational boundaries**
5. **Private institutions and companies have come up with degrees that have no government's stamp of approval, but are recognized to be of high quality:** eg. INSEAD, NIIT

Four (correlated) Drivers for Change

1. **Internationalization of education:** conflict between national agenda and international market for education and research
2. **Networked organizations:** the central role of the faculty is changing
3. **Changing governance requirements:** self-regulation is under attack in many professions
4. **Commoditization of education and commercialization of universities** in their search for alternative funding and as a reaction to cost pressures

Cost pressures....

- **Increasing the % of the age cohort that can attend higher education, makes it almost unaffordable for governments to pay for undergraduate education, (and all the more so for graduate education) in particular in view of other emerging priorities e.g the rising costs for health care and retirement.**
- **The endowment model is not easy to generalize, and has lost some of its attraction given the current financial environment.**
- **Rising costs of faculty and research cannot be matched forever by rising tuition fees: there is a need for some productivity gains and alternative sources of revenues.**

Some suggestions on what the university of the future can look like (I)

- ✓ We need a much stronger emphasis on *interdisciplinary education and research*
- ✓ More than ever a university education is about stimulating *critical thinking, reading well and communicating well* (rather than knowledge absorption and reproduction)
- ✓ Universities must become a partner in *life long academic learning* (beyond professional degrees and ‘outreach as a service’)
- ✓ Practice needs to penetrate into the university at all levels: governance, education, research & service
- ✓ Universities need to recognize that science, technological development and application evolve in symbiosis

Some suggestions on what the university of the future can look like (II)

- ✓ **We may see a rationalization of the university sector through (international) M&A and our institutions will have to work in networks of strong alliances** (can the airline industry be an example?)
- ✓ **Is there a future for universities as a ‘business unit’ in a larger institution of higher learning:** ex. the associations in Belgium
- ✓ **There may be a shift of the responsibility for the design of the curriculum to the student: more interactive and peer to peer delivery of more customized education**
- ✓ **Expect more diversity in faculty careers**
- ✓ **And the knowledge economy will require more knowledge workers: therefore I expect a major shift in doctoral education**

A shift in doctoral education

Postgraduate research	Doctoral education
Supervisory relationship	Course work
Thesis as an output	Knowing the subject
Stewards of a discipline	Knowledge workers
Discipline based	Problem based

Experiments @ SMU

- **Areas of excellence as a driver for interdisciplinary work:**
 - Business and Social Analytics
 - Financial institutions and financial markets
 - Innovation beyond technology
- **Common core in education for all six schools; emphasis on group work, projects, presentation and communication skills, integration of community service and CCA's, overseas exposure**
- **Development of postgraduate courses, diploma's and professional education for all age segments**
- **Research centers work in close collaboration with industry and government e.g. SKBI or ISES**
- **Advisory boards and Board of Trustees with a majority of business representatives**
- **Creation of meaningful and broad alliances in China, India and Europe**
- **Launch of an Executive PhD**