Governance Research
From Adolescence toward Maturity

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Governance has long been a topic of intense interest for institutional leaders and faculty. Many of the founders of the colonial colleges, for example, believed that the faculties’ control of England’s Oxford and Cambridge universities produced excessive sloth and autonomy, so they explicitly chose instead to adopt the Scottish model of placing ultimate institutional authority in the hands of external boards (Thelin, 2004). In the years since, institutional governance styles have evolved further: from de facto board control in the nation’s early years, to increasing faculty authority in the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries, to mounting pressures for democratic participation in the 1960s and 1970s, to, finally, the current emphasis on strategic, market-sensitive policymaking in the face of growing resource challenges (see Dill & Helm, 1988; Peterson, 2007; Thelin, 2004). But these generalizations are rough: there is and has always been enormous variation in the ways colleges and universities are governed, and since the earliest years, the relative governing roles and authority of faculty, presidents, boards, and the state have been continually subject to debate and dispute (Carnegie, 1982; Graham, 1989). Whether the issue is the adoption of new degree initiatives, the importance of religious beliefs in a college’s faculty hiring, or the appropriate role of intercollegiate athletics, governance has always attracted attention, and many people on and off campus care about it.

That caring, however, has usually taken the form of value assertions regarding what is better or best, rather than empirical, social-scientific investigation of governance structuring and functioning. Systematic research interest in the governance of higher education is a remarkably recent phenomenon. Arguably, effective analytical attention to governance came only in the 1960s, in the wake of not only dramatic growth in attendance, funding, and institutional diversity but also increasing attention to higher education as a distinctive and significant societal
institution. As Peterson and Mets (1987) put it, it was in those years that that “the trickle of writing . . . became a deluge” (p. 5).

What, then, have we learned? What fruits has a half century of accelerated analysis of governance borne? What directions seem promising for further work? The questions are far too big for a single book, much less a single chapter. If one wants to examine the college and university governance literature in a new and useful way, and that is the intent of this essay, it seems wiser to selectively craft a reasonably discrete take on a massive topic. Toward that end, we delimit the notion of governance for this essay to focus on the setting of purposes and goals of the organization and the creation of structures, policies, and programs in pursuit of those purposes and goals. Thus, we target the fundamental decision-making processes and arrangements of colleges and institutions. In choosing that approach, we attend little to issues of management (the implementation and execution of governance decisions), and we address leadership (the structures and processes of individual influences on decisions) only to the extent that it intersects with governance.¹

Also, it would be virtually impossible to cover in a single chapter not only governance research in the United States and Canada but also the burgeoning research literature on governance elsewhere. In the past few decades, perhaps no topic has occupied as much attention among higher education researchers internationally as governance (e.g., see Huisman, 2009; Maassen & Olsen, 2007; Marginson, 2000). The rise of the World Bank in educational analysis and reform, the fall of the Iron Curtain, the rapid expansion of higher education enrollment in East Asia, the emergence of neoliberal governing approaches in Europe, and the signing of numerous international cooperative initiatives (including most notably the Bologna Agreement) have each created remarkable opportunities for rethinking, and researching, governance. Each deserves more intensive treatment than we could offer here.

Finally, we do not address here the legal/judicial bases of governance. The modern university as an organizational form is, at its heart, a legal creation. The medieval origins of the university provided the precursor to the modern legal notion of the corporation (Dureya, 1973), and colleges and universities remain distinctive entities under the law. Institutions operate both under government charter and independently of direct governmental control. This duality benefits institutions but also can create significant governance tensions, as when larger political controversies press on the policies and practices of public universities.

While these issues are significant, covering them would take us well beyond the core organizational concerns of the chapter. Of course, in electing not to ad-

dress the issues above, we do not presume that we have narrowed the topic to easily manageable dimensions. We are sufficiently daunted to acknowledge that much good work undoubtedly goes unnoted in this essay.

We discuss here the governance literature prior to 1980 and then turn to what has emerged subsequently as numerous scholars turned their attention to the topic. In closing, we consider some potential arenas for the next generation of research on the topic—ideally, such work would contribute substantively to the ongoing research “deluge” first identified by Peterson and Mets.

The Pre-1980 Governance Literature

In a perceptive review of the state of research, Peterson (1985) identified 1963 and 1974 as key turning points in organizational studies in postsecondary education. Peterson characterized 1963 as the beginning of the “infancy” of higher education organizational studies (p. 6). In that same year, McConnell lamented the absence of literature on the organization, administration, and governance of higher education. Over the next decade, the field’s first systematic research efforts arose, along with numerous practical and conceptual work. The nascent field began attracting interest from sociologists, social psychologists, political scientists, and management scholars. By 1974, some two hundred research-based publications had been produced (Peterson, 1974). Postsecondary organizational studies, commented Peterson (1985), had reached “pre-adolescence.”

Despite these early, noteworthy gains, Peterson (1985) noted four concerns: unsophisticated research designs and methodology, an absence of reliably constructed instruments to support replication, limited theory development, and overreliance on “internal-purpose” theoretical models (viewing colleges and universities as rational and self-directed, the models focused largely on goal attainment and the internal management of organizational activities). These last two held particular relevance for the evolving study of postsecondary governance.

Postsecondary governance came increasingly to be viewed through three lenses in the literature: formal-rational or bureaucratic models, collegial or “professional bureaucratic” models, and political models.² With its Weberian underpinnings, the standard model of machine bureaucracy conceptualized postsecondary governance essentially as an exercise in rational decision making, in the calculation of the most efficient means by which goals can be achieved, and in the design of systems of managerial control capable of directing the activities of large numbers of personnel within the organization. Accordingly, the model emphasized efficiency, predictability, means-end hierarchies, intentionality, goal attain-
ment, rules and regulations, formal division of labor, patterns of formalization and standardization, top-down information flows, technical competence and performance, managerial control, and clear structural relationships between and among the organization's units. Building on the state of organizational knowledge at the time (e.g., see March, 1969), much of the scholarship on postsecondary governance in the 1960s and 1970s explored the nature and implications of these various elements in the functioning of colleges and universities (e.g., Baldridge, 1971a, 1971b; Blau, 1973; Corson, 1971; Mintzberg, 1979), with analysts often observing how postsecondary organizations tended to defy many of the core assumptions and attributes of the classic machine metaphor.

Conceptions of the college and university as collegium arose in the early 1970s, in part as a response to the perceived explanatory failings of the bureaucratic model. Most studies in this tradition sought to examine the nonrational or symbolic side of postsecondary organization. Rooted in cultural analysis and in the empirical case study methods of earlier sociologists, this scholarship conceptualized certain institutions as academic communities defined by broad participation, extensive consultation, collective responsibilities, flattened hierarchies, conformity to norms, adherence to traditions, and egalitarian impulses.

Pioneering contributions to this tradition, notably Clark (1970), focused mainly on certain liberal arts colleges and how the firmly embedded values of those postsecondary institutions shape the organizations’ identities, help them form shared accounts and common beliefs, “guide the thoughts and steer the actions” of participants, and, ultimately, condition governance patterns (Clark, 1992, vii). Clark argued that these forces were sufficiently profound to encourage, over time, the development of a distinctive organizational character, which he famously termed an “organizational saga.” Clark’s was not the first scholarship to focus on institutional culture (e.g., see Pace, 1962), but its theoretical power was seminal (Maassen, 1996), leading to a notable outpouring of research over the next twenty years, including studies of efforts to better define, differentiate, typologize, conceptualize, and assess academic culture (Masland, 1985; Peterson & Spencer, 1993; Tierney, 1988), to manage academic culture (Dill, 1982), and to understand culture’s impacts on campus governance (Baird, 1988; Chaffee & Tierney, 1988; Kolman & Hossler, 1987; Tierney, 1989).

Finally, the political model arose as a central lens in higher education studies in the 1960s and 1970s. This lens built foundationally on three key concepts derived from the pluralist school of American politics: dispersion of political power, interest group competition and political bargaining. Political scientists operating in this tradition held to the idea that power to make decisions in Ameri- cian society fundamentally is fragmented. Consequently, public policy is the product of (1) continual struggle between groups that must compete with one another for resources, influence, and power and (2) bargaining or political negotiation between groups and elected officials (e.g., Dahl, 1967). Because no one group can dominate all the others, governance takes the form of compromise among groups. The tendency toward group competition and compromise is the basis for a democratic equilibrium that effectively (if not always efficiently) serves the public weal. As Dahl (1967) once famously observed, “Because constant negotiations among different centers of power are necessary in order to make decisions, citizens and leaders will perfect the precious art of dealing peacefully with their conflicts, and not merely to the benefit of one partisan but to the mutual benefit of all the parties to a conflict” (p. 24).

Borrowing many of these ideas from political science, including the seminal work of Cyert and March (1963), postsecondary researchers conceptualized the college and university as an arena of coalitional activity in which various parties exhibit differing preferences, interests, and goals and in which continual intergroup struggles over resources and power profoundly influence ultimate decisions. In a landmark case study of organizational conflict at New York University, Baldridge (1971b) developed an “interest-articulation” model that emphasized the significance of factions, interests, coalitional activities, and bargaining in shaping institutional governance processes and outcomes. He characterized the political model as providing a more realistic appraisal of university governance processes than either the bureaucratic or collegial models precisely because of the attention it paid to the role of power and group conflict in explaining how decisions are made. Indeed, the differences between the political model and the other two basic governance models of the pre-1974 era are never more evident than on the question of their outlook on conflict. Whereas the bureaucratic and collegial models tend to view dissension as dystopic, the political model regards it as an important factor in promoting needed organizational change. As Thompson (1967) observed, while it might be expected that conflict inescapably would lead to instability, political systems in organizations tend to produce dominant coalitions that can remain stable over time. Disruptive power tends to be minimized because members of the organization belong to more than one group, thus providing a check against instability, a point noted as holding true in universities by both Baldridge (1971b) and Bess and Dee (2008).

The political model holds distinct governance implications. While bureaucratic systems are governed through vertical coordination, and collegial systems through horizontal coordination, political systems are governed through the co-
ordination of conflict (Birnbaum, 1991), hence the many studies of this period that focused on conflict management as key to understanding governance, particularly college and university budgeting and resource allocation (Chaffee, 1983; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974). Much of this literature also examined the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the political model of governance. As political systems, colleges and universities can function despite goal conflict or ambiguity, and their inefficiency can actually enhance stability as many coalitions and actors effectively counterbalance one another’s influence in the larger system. As Baldrige (1972b) wrote, “This may be a better way of grappling with the complexity that surrounds decision processes within a loosely coordinated, fragmented . . . system” (pp. 191–192), such as characterizes many university settings. Yet the political model has its limitations, too. It conceptualizes an organization that often responds ineffectually to problems demanding rational analysis, produces inefficiencies in resource allocation, and fails to account adequately for long-term, routine decision processes because of its episodic focus.

By the mid-1970s, observed Peterson (1985), postsecondary organization theory and research had moved past “early childhood” and entered into an adolescent stage of development, generating a large and growing number of research-oriented studies. Notably, several distinctively new perspectives on governance became increasingly influential, including Cohen, March, and Olsen’s (1972) and Cohen and March’s (1974) “garbage can” model of organizational choice and Weick’s (1976) “loosely coupled systems” model. These publications signaled a shift in the literature toward models grounded in ambiguity, contingent choice processes, and emergent social systems. These approaches often rejected or called deeply into question the assumptions underlying the three principal models of the previous era.

The work of Cohen, March, and Olsen (hereafter, CMO), in particular, left a deep imprint in part because of its groundbreaking conception of the distinctiveness of colleges and universities as organizations. The key distinguishing feature of the CMO model is its conception of the modern university as an organized anarchy. As such, the university organization possesses three distinctive properties. The first is problematic preferences. “The organization,” observed the authors, “operates on the basis of a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences” (Cohen et al., 1972, p. 1). Because it is often unclear what preferences decision makers hold, the university resembles more a “loose collection of ideas” than a coherent decision structure. The second organizational property is unclear technology. Although the organization “manages to survive and even produce” (p. 1), members often do not comprehend the organization’s decision processes.

Rather, the university tends to operate contingently, haltingly, and often in ways defying straightforward rationalization. The third property is fluid participation. The high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the professionals staffing the university’s operating core means participants vary in the amount of time and effort they may choose to dedicate to different activities and roles. Because the involvement of participants varies and the boundaries of the organization are vague and shifting, the decision makers for any particular choice opportunity change irregularly and, often, unpredictably.

Beyond this depiction of the university’s underlying organizational properties, Cohen and colleagues (1972) described how the organized anarchy makes choices absent clear, consistent, and shared goals and how its members (and occasional members) direct their attention to certain issues, problems, and solutions. They characterize organizational decision making as a complicated interplay between four “streams” of activity: (1) the development of problems in the organization, (2) the actions and behaviors of participants, (3) the formulation of solutions, and (4) the opportunities for choice (i.e., decision). Problems do not always clearly present themselves. Participants’ interest and involvement vary widely from one moment to the next. Solutions do not necessarily flow from the problems to which they eventually become attached; sometimes solutions precede problems. When choice opportunities arise, they may not always correspond with the times when problems need to be solved. Consequently, timing and contingency have notable effects on decision outcomes. They condition the ways in which problems and solutions are introduced into the organization, the manner by which the organization’s energy can be deployed, and the impacts of the decision structure itself.

To understand processes within organized anarchies in general, and governance within postsecondary institutions in particular, observed Cohen and colleagues, one can view a choice opportunity as a metaphorical “garbage can” into which “various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants as they are generated” (Cohen et al., 1972, p. 2). Streams of problems, solutions, and participants drift continuously throughout the system but often are independent, very loosely associated, or “partially uncoupled” from one another (p. 16). In such a system, problems linger in search of decision situations in which they can be aired; solutions search for problems to which they may be viewed as the answer; and participants search for status, for issues that will help them build their careers, or for opportunities to shirk or flee. Choice opportunities provoke decisions, but the ambiguity that runs rampant throughout the organized anarchy results in decisions that are highly contingent, unpredictable, and rarely successful.
in solving problems. In Cohen and March’s (1974) memorable phrasing, “The garbage can process is one in which problems, solutions, and participants move from one choice opportunity to another in such a way that the nature of the choice, the time it takes, and the problems it solves all depend on a relatively complicated intermeshing of elements. These include the mix of choices available at any one time, the mix of problems that have access to the organization, the mix of solutions looking for problems, and the outside demands on the decision makers” (p. 16). Consequently, the choice process is nonlinear. As Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972) themselves pointed out, when measured against a conventional model of rational choice, garbage can processes appear “pathological” (p. 16). Yet such standards are inappropriate, maintain the authors: although university garbage can processes do not actually resolve problems very well, they do enable choices to be made under conditions of extreme goal ambiguity and conflict.

Notwithstanding its popularity as an approach to understanding postsecondary organization, the CMO model has attracted sharp criticism. Most pointedly, Bendor, Moe, and Shotts (2001) have argued that despite its great potential and wide-ranging influence, “the theory that has grown up over the years is so complex and confusing, and some of its components are so seriously flawed, that there is little reason for thinking that it can look ahead to a more fertile future. For fundamental reasons, the theory lacks the rigor, discipline, and analytic power needed for genuine progress” (p. 169). To understand the critique, it is important to note, as do Bendor and colleagues, that Cohen, and colleagues provide both a verbal description of the features of organized anarchies (most often illustrated with hypothetical and survey- and interview-based examples from university settings) and a computerized simulation of the workings of such settings. Bendor and colleagues suggest that the verbal formulation of the CMO model and the presumably derived computer simulation of the model are at odds with each other in core assumptions, logic, and empirical implications. Indeed, Bendor and colleagues’ own explorations of the CMO simulation specifications led to scenarios in which decision makers followed each other in packs, a result essentially opposite the result one would expect under the verbal formulations of the original model. That is, the simulations reveal an organizational world much more orderly than the model’s original, colorfully phrased prose presentations would ever suggest. Reviewing their results, Bendor and colleagues conclude: “This is ironic. The informal theory of the garbage can is famous for depicting a world that is much more complex than that described by classical theories of organizational choice. The latter’s tidy image of goal specification, alternative generation, evaluation, and choice is replaced by a complex swirl of problems looking for solutions, solutions looking for problems, participants wandering around looking for work, and all three searching for choice opportunities. Yet the simulation depicts almost none of this and in fact creates a world of remarkable order” (p. 182).

Such critiques have not gone unchallenged, however. In a strongly phrased rebuttal, Olsen (2001) countered that Bendor and colleagues had misportrayed both the spirit and the results of Cohen, March, and Olsen’s model. Suggesting that proposing “theory” was never their goal, Olsen emphasized instead their more modest, largely heuristic aims. In a related vein, Olsen argued that the simulation results were neither surprising nor defaming for the model because the model never presumed that all decision behavior should be disorderly and atomized. Stressing that repetition and “clumping” were core elements of the model rather than anomalies disconfirming the model’s power, Olsen states that what Bendor and colleagues viewed “as a major ‘bug’ we saw—and still see—as a ‘feature.’ Namely, the simulation reproduces an experience from our own lives: moving through a series of meetings on nominally disparate topics, reaching few decisions, while talking repeatedly with many of the same people about the same problems” (p. 192). Bendor and colleagues and other critics raise useful points regarding the CMO model, but the undeniable provocative organized anarchy and garbage can ideas have clearly aided understanding of postsecondary organization.

Arising in same period as the CMO model was the complementary concept of loosely coupled systems. Popularized by Weick (1976), the loose-coupling concept built particularly on work by Glassman (1973) and March and Olsen (1975) and on the principles of general systems theory, which was beginning to influence the organizational sciences (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Weick portrayed school and college systems as a counterconventional organizational form characterized by their lack of rationality, efficiency, tidiness, and tightly coordinated structures aimed toward goal attainment. Weick drew a vital distinction between loose coupling and a loosely coupled system. While the former term may be appropriated to describe the relationship between any two organizational units or entities that are linked to one another weakly or infrequently, a loosely coupled system, such as characterizes many schools, colleges, and universities, is one in which minimal interdependence pervades the entire organization over time. Distinctively, loosely coupled systems organizations exhibit an abundance of slack resources, minimal coordination between and among units, high levels of decentralization
and delegation, tendencies toward equifinality, and causal independence. Thus, Weick later wrote (1982), loose coupling is evident when elements affect each other “suddenly (rather than continuously), occasionally (rather than constantly), negligibly (rather than significantly), indirectly (rather than directly), and eventually (rather than immediately)” (p. 380).

Viewing educational organizations as loosely coupled systems, noted Weick, is a descriptive and empirical exercise rather than a normative one. Weick (1976) argued that, although traditionalists may regard such systems “as a sin or something to be apologized for” (p. 6), they can provide distinct advantages. Such systems tend to be highly adaptive, mutable, and innovative and can afford the organization a sensitive-sensing mechanism, a capacity for isolating and halting the failures of one part of the system from spreading to other parts, a high degree of self-determination, and lower coordination costs.

The notion of organizations as loosely coupled systems gained widespread popularity throughout the social sciences in the 1970s and the 1980s, although Weick later lamented the concept’s drift. Reviewing the literature, Orton and Weick (1990) noted that many later interpretations had lost dialectical quality in the move toward unidimensional understandings. For Orton and Weick, the problem inherent in loose coupling is the demand that it places on analysts to think simultaneously about rationality and indeterminacy, a demand largely unmet in the growing literature on the topic. Regardless, the kind of organization Weick (1976) initially envisioned clearly shared little in common with the bureaucratic and political models of postsecondary governance models so ingrained in the field a decade earlier.

Although certainly less “integrated” than “fragmented” (Peterson, 1985), the postsecondary governance literature of the late 1970s unmistakably had matured in a number of important respects. The range of governance questions, issues, and topics studied had broadened. The conceptualizations had grown in number, richness, and complexity. Because most writings increasingly assumed an open systems, rather than a closed systems, perspective, the literature’s principal viewpoint had shifted from purposive, internally oriented models to emergent, adaptive ones. Unpredictability, contingency, and ambiguity had grown more commonplace in the field’s thinking on governance, leaving a large imprint on the field’s future research and conceptual directions. Methodologically, the field still lacked the development Peterson (1985) had characterized as requisite for full maturation, but scholars had begun to pursue a widening range of techniques beyond the long-dominant case study approach. Indeed, both conceptually and methodologically, the field of the late 1970s had assumed the essential form into which it would grow more completely over the coming decades.

The Emerging Research Literature on Governance

Since the early 1980s, governance research has come to encompass all aspects of U.S. higher education, from institutions’ programmatic and departmental levels through to the national level of task forces, associations, commissions, and government agencies. Those levels provide a basis for a review of the profusion of work since that time.

Goverance AT THE UNIT Level

The most significant governance activity on campuses arguably occurs not at the institutional level but at the level of the academic subunits on campus: programs, departments, and, in large institutions, field-based colleges such as engineering, liberal arts, education, business, and law. Although only a limited number of empirical analyses have tackled governance at this level (Hearn, 2007), theorists have produced ideas well worth researchers’ attention.

Clark (1987) stresses that each academic unit is a vehicle through which faculty leverage their professional authority. Professors, he suggests, “use the department as a tool to mediate between the realities of a particular university context and the demands and desires of their own discipline . . . . Forming the base of the structure of faculty power, the department has undergirded the development of a dual authority structure within universities and colleges . . . . The department is the local rock on which the power of voice is based in academia, the organized base for the capacity of academics to exercise influence within the organization to which they belong and to branch out into larger circles” (pp. 64–65).

Massy, Wilger, and Colbeck (1994) follow similar lines of argument, using the term “hollowed collegiality” to capture aspects of the normative climate in departments in which faculty collegially discuss certain issues (especially those relating to facilitating research) while regularly avoiding collegial discussion of such issues as improving teaching and learning. In a similar vein, Massy and Zemsky (1997) argue on the basis of case study evidence that decentralizing governance responsibilities to the departmental level leads to increasing institutional costs, as faculty act to protect their workloads in teaching, preserve resources for research and other prerogatives, and stifle attempts to improve efficiency. This process is the heart of what Massy (1996) terms the “academic ratchet,” a prob-
lem exacerbated by certain predisposing conditions: "(1) strongly held beliefs about the intrinsic worth of teaching and research programs, (2) a collegial approach to decision making that places consensus at the center and allows little room for alternative points of view, (3) powerful beliefs about academic freedom that are sometimes interpreted as forbidding interference in faculty activities, and (4) the influence of students and alumni who do not want to see the reputation of their program or department negatively impacted" (p. 85). The academic ratchet concept suggests a number of testable propositions, but there appears to have been little empirical follow-up.

The most fundamental decisions in academic units regard who will be allowed to continue as faculty and thus to help shape the unit's future. Hearn and Anderson (2002) found that departments with larger instructional loads and lower levels of internal curricular specialization were more likely to have split votes over promotion and tenure decisions, as were departments from disciplines with a "soft" knowledge base. Thus, consensual unanimity was harder to achieve in units with low levels of disciplinary knowledge development and agreement.

Similarly, Braxton and Hargens (1996) found in a series of studies that departments in high-consensus fields such as physics tend to be more efficient, to be less conflicted, to change and adapt more easily, to exhibit less turnover, to be more collaborative in publications, and to be more effective in achieving certain goals and obtaining financial and human resources, compared with units in low-consensus fields such as sociology. Similarly, Pfeffer (1993), Collins (1994), Smart, Feldman, and Ethington (2000), and others have found evidence that discipline-related factors can influence governance.

Political analysis of unit-level governance is unfortunately rare. Welsh and Slusher (1986) examined the appointment of deans in professional colleges on several university campuses. Their analysis suggested that the level of curricular and research interdependence among faculty in different units mediated the effects of faculty agreement on political activity. When interdependent faculty were in agreement, appointment processes remained relatively unpolarized, but when non-interdependent faculty were in agreement, political activity blossomed. The authors concluded that political activity serves two purposes: to assist existing coalitions in building advantages, and to facilitate the formation of new coalitions within colleges.

Some analysts (e.g., Kaplan, 2004) have observed that governance arrangements appear to matter little ultimately in departmental and college decisions, but the arena is clearly understudied. If academic units are truly at the heart of institutional and faculty life, the relative absence of systematic governance research at this level demands redress.

GOVERNANCE AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS

Institutional presidents and provosts must "govern" in addition to managing and leading. That is, their work involves shaping fundamental directions for the institution. In this, they must act in conjunction with boards above them in the hierarchy and faculty, staff, and students below them. Leaders' governance concerns appear to be primarily strategic: which curricular areas to emphasize or deemphasize, which potential revenue-generating markets to embrace or avoid, which stances to take in response to emerging social, economic, technological, and political developments, and so forth.

The strategic perspective emerged in the early 1980s in the higher education literature, and governance was a central concern from the start, addressing the question of how best to determine institutional directions. The answers varied. Keller's widely read volume (1983) emphasized the role of leaders, but others emphasized the role of constituencies, with particular attention to the role of faculty in the identification of internal programmatic strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (e.g., Cope, 1981). After some successes in other forms of organizations, the strategic movement in higher education has found widespread acceptance but only debatable success. The relative weakness of hierarchical and lateral coupling in colleges and universities (e.g., faculty's commitments to shared governance, resistance to central authority, and reluctance to intercede in the autonomy of faculty in other fields) may hinder effective leader-driven strategic change (Dill & Helm, 1988; Hearn, 1988; Weick, 1976). Thus, arguably, strategic change may be most constrained on campuses with the deepest traditions of faculty autonomy.

Also, as Peterson (2007) has noted, the strategic movement ran headlong into the changing postsecondary knowledge industry of the 1990s and beyond. Earlier challenges had involved such issues as growth, equity, retrenchment, and quality preservation, but the emerging new era has brought a rapidly changing marketplace, shifting consumer and stakeholder preferences, and new delivery models for teaching and research. Peterson argues that, instead of focusing on responding to environments by identifying key institutional niches, strategic governance and decision making should now build upon the particulars of a school's history, internal and external environments, culture, and resources.

Peterson (2007) identifies three elaborations of the strategic framework to fit
emerging circumstances: adaptive, contextual, and entrepreneurial models. Sporn and Gumport have taken the adaptive approach, examining how certain institutions have responded effectively to emerging environmental forces by reshaping institutional configurations, processes, and emphases (Gumport & Sporn, 1999; Sporn, 1999). Peterson himself (1997) has pursued the contextual approach, arguing that the emerging context is ill defined, rapidly changing, and unpredictable, with the knowledge industry mediating between larger social forces and specific institutional changes. Finally, Clark (1998) has viewed strategic change through an entrepreneurial lens, with special attention to conditions facing what he terms "the academic heartland" of the core liberal arts and sciences units. In each case, Peterson (2007) suggests, effective institutional leadership and governance are becoming more contingent and more closely tied to particular campus circumstances in time (historical, periodic, and trend contexts) and space (key markets and resources). One might infer that, in such a view, the historical buffering of institutional decision making from external developments and pressures (the "ivory tower" metaphor) loses force by the day.

**Governance at the Institutional Level: Senates, Committees, Task Forces, and Commissions**

Faculty from across campuses regularly participate in a variety of governance activities for the institution as a whole, including campus senates, promotion and tenure committees, admissions committees, "blue ribbon" strategic planning task forces, presidential commissions, and the like. Although hortatory essays and books on these activities proliferate, analytical, empirically based literature on the faculty's role in shared institutional governance is scarce (Birnbaum, 1989; Kezar, 2005).

But some high-quality empirical analyses have been produced. Much of that literature focuses on program creation and discontinuation, a topic on the border between faculty and administrative responsibilities (Gumport, 1993). In a series of case studies, Eckel (2000) found that, on campuses facing program closures, faculty participation in shared governance could facilitate difficult choices but that the faculty role was not as initiators of termination processes (largely in the province of administrative leaders) but rather as leaders of choices regarding the fate of particular campus programs, as leaders in opposition to particular termination plans, and, less directly, as effective legitimators of program termination decisions. Similarly, Hardy (1990b) found that shared governance and collegiality can coexist with retrenchment when leaders create structures and processes that ensure communication and consensus and reduce the potentials for political maneuvering.

But politics and power are ever present. Results from a variety of studies (see Hackman, 1985; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974) suggest that programmatic resource allocations in universities are substantially associated with unit power on campuses. Among the indicators of power such works consider are grants funding and enrollments, the external reputation of academic departments' disciplinary fields, unit representation on key decision bodies, and the campus-level political connections of key unit actors.

In a case study analysis, Gumport (1993) found that "the fate of contending academic fields may have less to do with the ideas themselves (that is, how original, coherent, or brilliant) and more to do with their instrumental value vis-à-vis the broader political economy that tilts toward an explicit service orientation to the state and its ancillary abundant markets (for example, corporations). A significant problem remains in public research institutions: academic ideology promises faculty collegial authority, shared governance, and a meritocracy of rewards, yet economic realities loom large" (p. 305). Reflecting on such results, Gumport and Passer (1999) suggest that marketplace ideology and the demands of key resource providers can trump internal collegiality and traditional academic values in program-reduction decisions.

Interestingly, faculty participation in campus-level governance may have limited effects. Kaplan’s extensive case study work (2004) found that, unsurprisingly, faculty play smaller roles in financial and institutional decisions than in academic decisions on campus. But strikingly, Kaplan also found that levels of faculty participation in campus decisions were unrelated to program closures or ultimate choices in presidential searches. Faculty involvement was nevertheless significantly (albeit slightly) associated with higher salaries, increased chances of adoption of merit-pay policies, and lower teaching loads. Interestingly, Kaplan’s work suggested that routinized governance structures and processes have mixed influences: having meetings of the full faculty on a campus was associated with lower rather than higher salary levels, and the existence of academic senates was associated with lower teaching loads but also with lower educational expenditures. Perhaps most striking was Kaplan’s finding that in no case was administrative participation in governance associated with outcomes faculty might view less favorably. In sum, Kaplan’s work fits with other results suggesting an absence of powerful faculty influences in overall campus governance.

Might faculty governance activities actually work against traditional academic values? Talburt’s case study analysis (2005) led her to proclaim: “I question claims that faculty inherently serve as a ‘check’ on the market logic of administrators… [Rapid] changes in ideas about and practices in the university brought on by
corporatization create conditions that affect faculty members' understandings of their work and identities—and, thus, their responses to their surroundings in contexts such as governance” (p. 462). Arguing that universities not only serve corporations but emulate them, Talburt suggests that service to corporate interests has reshaped faculty members' perceptions of their governance roles.

Marketized change efforts devaluing established governance approaches may run still larger risks. In an intriguing case study, Kezar (2005) found that radical administration-led reform efforts on a small liberal arts campus threatened symbolic systems shared understandings while energizing faculty participation in governance. Her case study analysis revealed that even over the longer term, when the hypothesized benefits of radical reorganization on the campus might have been seen as most likely, notable negative consequences persisted. Kezar interprets these findings as supporting earlier work by Birnbaum (1991) and Schuster, Smith, Corak, and Yamada (1994) and directly discredit calls by Keller (1983), Benjamin and Carroll (1998), and others for movement toward “joint big decision committees” supplanting slower, more established governance structures and processes.

Birnbaum (2004) has observed that most attempts to streamline institutional governance or improve the qualities of decisions have failed because they rely on weak assumptions, for example, that faculty do not care about their institutions, that faculty resist measurement because they fear being discovered, or that faculty deliberation usually means misguided inaction at best or ineffectiveness at worst. Birnbaum proposes that those who see limits to current governance arrangements might more productively focus less on the rationalistic concerns such as structures, rules, and processes and more on the core commitments and values behind governance. Notably, faculty have every right to be concerned over institutions' core academic technologies because that is where their own expertise and interests lie. For Birnbaum, the central concept is thus "soft governance": the notion that all institutional parties respect academic norms and the faculty's historical, culturally rooted role in preserving those norms and will work to preserve those norms in whatever organizational form seems most appropriate to the context. Birnbaum's point echoes that of many others (e.g., Clark, 1983b) in expressing concern that the imposition of rationalistic, managerial ideologies threatens academic institutions' most valuable features: ambiguity of authority, openness to innovation and creativity, and normative commitment to democratic governance.

Clearly, the interplay between rationalistic values, motivations, and interpretations on the one hand, and symbolic values, motivations, and interpretations on the other profoundly shapes campus governance (Hardy, 1990b), and no single theoretical lens affords definitive insights. Multiple agendas are being pursued, and multiple interpretations are possible. Some (e.g., Lee, 1993) have taken this context as a call for qualitative analysis. As Hardy (1990a) has noted, mere observation is inadequate: “Actions that look rational may be collegial or political, the garbage can may be transformed into a political arena, and so on. This situation is most clear when contrasting collegial and political models. Conflict may occur under a collegial system when different conceptions of the common good exist, which will not necessarily be out of the ordinary in a system of loose coupling and specialization. Conversely, apparent consensus may have been engineered by actors for their own political advantage. The challenge for the researcher is, then, to look beyond the superficial behaviour and understand the motivations and rationales of the various actors” (p. 417).

But work by Pfeffer (1992), Kaplan (2004), and others suggests that at least some aspects of these processes may be amenable to quantitative/positivist analytical tools, and such efforts should not be abandoned. While case studies and similar approaches may better capture understandings and meanings in strategic change, it would be foolhardy to abandon investigations that might shed additional light on the nature and causes of changes in the objective circumstances of various actors in strategic dramas.

**Institutional Governing Boards**

There has been significantly more analysis of institutional governing boards than of senates and other internal governing activities, perhaps because of boards' centrality in choices concerning markets, affordability, accountability, and transparency. Interestingly, though, much of such work has been descriptive or normative, rather than theoretically based and empirically rigorous (Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2003).

Still, some intriguing work has emerged. The growing spirit of marketization and entrepreneurialism among boards has attracted increasing research attention. Chait (1995), Lazerson (1997), and Slaughter and Leslie (1997) noted the connections emerging between boards and the new academic capitalism around the same time, and the last stressed a need for theory-driven analysis of the phenomenon. Following that suggestion, Pusser, Slaughter, and Thomas (2006) examined the striking differences in the boards of public and private institutions, finding that private institutions' boards exhibited far more director interlocks with corporations engaged in such emerging arenas as bio-science.

The structuring of university governing boards also has attracted attention. Kaplan (2005) found little consistent relationship between boards' organiza-
tional characteristics (size, corporate memberships, meeting frequencies, selection mechanisms, faculty participation) and such outcomes as leadership turnover, program closures, expenditures, and faculty salaries. In related work using principal-agent and public-choice literatures, Tompa (1985) investigated why some states choose systemwide board structures while others choose institution-specific boards. Her analyses suggest that larger states were more likely to have consolidated (i.e., across-institution) governing boards, while states with large numbers of private institutions were less likely to have such boards. Thus, she concluded, political costs associated with the interests of educators, taxpayers, and others drive states’ governance choices. In later work (1990), Tompa found that public institutions with institution-specific boards were more responsive to taxpayer demands than institutions in consolidated governing systems. Notably, institutions governed by their own boards operated more like private institutions in their reliance on tuition, exhibited fewer students per faculty member, and maintained lower proportions of tenured faculty. Tompa’s cross-sectional methodology precludes causal inferences from her two board-focused studies, but her core questions have been too little considered: What factors drive the ways decision makers structure postsecondary governance arrangements, and what are the implications of those choices?

There has been an increase in attention to the role of boards in dealing with challenges and impending, or at least perceived, crises. Pusser and Orfordika (2001) employ theories of the state, theories of institutions, and theories of power and elite formation to build understanding of these issues. Their work in a Mexican and a U.S. institution suggests that issues of inequality, diversity, elite interests, and ideology play out similarly in board actions in the two settings.

Unfortunately, a number of important board-related topics have attracted little attention. Although aggressive board actions in the avowed pursuit of quality have been frequently lamented and often disparagingly labeled “micromanagement” (Kauffman, 1993), there has been little systematic analysis of that issue. Similarly, while Kerr and Gade (1989) and others have lamented boards’ ineffective communication with faculty members and their politicization in public institutions, researchers have not responded with empirical analysis.

STATE-LEVEL GOVERNANCE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The literature on postsecondary governance at the state level is large and long standing. That scholarship developed a distinctive identity in the 1950s and 1960s, paralleling the dizzying growth of postsecondary education and the emergence of state postsecondary governance systems in the United States during the postwar era. The arc of the literature proceeds from early descriptive and typological accounts describing the evolution and formalization of state governance systems, through more recent conceptual undertakings aimed at shedding light on governance reform, to the emergence over the past decade of increasingly sophisticated efforts to model governance reform and effects empirically at the state level.

By all accounts, 1959 stands as a watershed year in this literature. That year witnessed publication of two landmark studies—by Moos and Rourke and by Glenny—that powerfully shaped the direction of future study. Against the backdrop of growing concern over the erosion of institutional autonomy at the hands of governmental regulators, Moos and Rourke’s The Campus and the State (1959) garnered widespread attention for its illuminating of the “grave threat” that state centralization posed to “the tradition of the free college or university in America” (p. 3). In it, the authors described the myriad personnel and budgeting controls that were being imposed on higher education by state executive and legislative agencies throughout the nation. Moos and Rourke cautioned against tightly coordinated systems, arguing these forms of control would “leach quality and originality” (p. 226) from public institutions. They concluded that higher education in the United States would thrive only if left to govern itself.

In the same year, Glenny’s Autonomy of Public Colleges situated itself at the opposite end of debate over autonomy and accountability in U.S. higher education (McLendon, 2003c). In the first comprehensive assessment of state-level higher education planning, coordinating, and governing boards, Glenny studied twelve states that practiced one or another of the three basic forms of statewide organization of higher education: voluntary coordination, statewide coordination, and consolidated governance. Using interviews and case studies, Glenny evaluated board performance in planning, program allocation, and budgeting. In contrast to Moos and Rourke, Glenny (1959) was most critical of the voluntary coordination model, believing it structurally prone toward ineffective coordination and inadequate representation of the public interest. He also expressed significant concern, however, for the increasingly onerous regulatory controls exercised by statewide governing boards, an increasingly adopted governance approach of the era. Glenny implied a preference for coordinating agencies, praising their capability for meeting statewide needs while limiting direct government intrusion. Numerous observers later characterized Glenny’s work as landmark, in part because it was the first to assess systematically the strengths and weaknesses of the various modes of statewide organization (Gove & Solomon, 1968; McConnell, 1971).
The following two decades witnessed many other governance assessments. Chambers (1961) extolled the merits of voluntary coordination and railed against what he termed "the blighting effect of [higher education's] immersion in a welter of bureaucratic controls" (p. xi). Glenny himself followed up with numerous works cogently articulating the need for more, and more effectively implemented, statewide coordination (e.g., see Glenny, Berdahl, Palola, & Paltridge, 1971; Glenny & Bowen, 1977). Notably, Glenny and Daglish (1973) contrasted university systems holding constitutional autonomy with structurally based ones. Their empirical analysis concluded that the procedural autonomy of constitutional universities had eroded but the threat facing statutory universities was far graver: these institutions appeared "destined to become just another agency of state government" (p. 141).

Others contributed importantly to this literature, prominently including Kenneth Mortimer (e.g., see Mortimer, 1971). Berdahl’s (1971) examination of institutional coordination in nineteen states was especially influential, providing two key contributions. First, he created what would become the field’s standard classification system of governance structures, facilitating analysis of governance trends (McGuinness, 1997) and serving as an analytical resource underpinning future empirical investigations (e.g., Hearn & Griswold, 1994; Lowry, 2001; McLendon, Heller, & Young, 2005). Second, Berdahl drew a useful distinction between “substantive autonomy” (the institution’s latitude to decide goals) and “procedural autonomy” (the institution’s latitude over how it would accomplish the goals), a distinction taken up in many subsequent studies.

Much of the literature since the 1970s has continued in this vein of describing governance patterns and assessing the merits of various arrangements. The policy context has evolved dramatically, however. In the place of increasing governance centralization and steady state expenditure growth, state governments have begun to face economic transformations (e.g., globalization), mounting budget pressures, and growing calls for more accountability (McLendon, Hearn, & Deaton, 2006). Consequently, many states have restructured governance, often deregulating and decentralizing (McLendon, 2003c). The literature has expanded with studies documenting state governance reform trends (e.g., Hines, 2000; Leslie & Novak, 2003; Marcus, 1997; McLendon, 2003c) and studies examining specific restructuring contexts and reforms (e.g., Berdahl, 1998; Greer, 1998; Hines, 1988; Leslie & Novak, 2003; MacTaggart, 1998; Marcus, Pratt, & Stevens, 1997; McGuinness, 1995; McLendon, 2003b, 2003c; Mingle, 1983; Novak, 1996; Novak & Leslie, 2001). Three prominent reform modalities of this period involved the transfer of decision authority closer to the campus level: (1) the deregulating of state procedural controls, (2) the loosening of state governance and statewide coordination, and (3) the advent of so-called charter, or enterprise, colleges and universities (McLendon & Hearn, 2009).

Paralleling these analyses of policy reform has been the emergence of a conceptually oriented literature on the politics and processes of change (Bastedo, 2005, 2009; Leslie & Berdahl, 2008; McLendon, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Mills, 2007; Ness, 2010). These efforts have sought to explain policy change in individual states and, sometimes, across them, applying theoretical frameworks from political science, sociology, and organizational studies and usually employing qualitative research methods. For example, McLendon (2003b) examined the explanatory power of several agenda-setting theories of political science, notably Kingdon’s “revised streams” model, in studying the rise of initiatives aimed at decentralizing state governance in the late 1990s in Illinois, Arkansas, and Hawaii. Building on that earlier study, Mills (2007) examined the overhaul of the Florida Board of Regents. Drawing on institutional theory, Bastedo (2009) studied the emergence of activist policymaking by members of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education.

As the state governance literature has developed, informative case studies have continued to appear (e.g., Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney, 1999), but the emergence of a growing body of quantitative empirical research on state governance effects is the most striking recent development. A common element linking these various studies is an effort to model governance impacts across state contexts and, more recently, over time. There are two distinct strands within this vein of scholarship, however, differentiated by whether the phenomenon is studied at the campus or state level.

Volkwein’s numerous studies in the 1980s (e.g., see Volkwein 1986, 1987) represent the longest-running program of research on the campus-level impacts of state governance. Focusing mainly on public doctoral universities, Volkwein developed an index of state regulatory controls that he deployed in a series of cross-sectional, multivariate analyses of the relationships between state control and the fiscal and academic performance of public universities. His studies generally found the degree of state regulation unrelated to administrative expenditures, salary, or elaborateness; undergraduate quality; faculty reputational quality; faculty productivity; fund-raising success; or the amount universities received in grants and gifts. Using resource dependence theory to explain these findings, Volkwein and Malik (1997) concluded that the “sizes and resource bases” of public universities, rather than their regulatory climates, appear to hold the keys to quality (p. 37).
Lowry (2001) contributed further to the literature on campus-level state governance effects. Drawing on principal-agent theories, Lowry conceptualized state governance structures for higher education as, in effect, systems of political representation because the different institutional arrangements "affect the ability of different actors to influence decisions" (p. 846). Lowry reasoned that regulatory coordinating boards essentially are extensions of governors' capacity to supervise because governors appoint board members. Thus regulatory boards should be found to behave in a manner generally consistent with the preferences of governors (and voters), leading to lower tuition levels. In contrast, governance structures lacking such direct political oversight (e.g., consolidated governing boards) should tend to institutionalize the preferences of faculty and administrators, resulting in higher tuition levels. Using data on 407 public universities for 1995, Lowry found that institutions located in states with regulatory coordinating boards in fact charged significantly lower prices.

Research on state-level governance effects, as opposed to campus-level effects, has acquired significant momentum over the past two decades, focusing on the relationship between statewide governance arrangements and various postsecondary policy outcomes (Doyle, 2006; Doyle, McLendon, & Hearn, forthcoming; Hearn & Griswold, 1994; Hearn, Griswold, & Marine, 1996; McLendon, Deaton, & Hearn, 2007; McLendon et al., 2006; McLendon et al., 2005; Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Sabloff, 1997; Zumeta, 1996). This research has examined empirically a wide variety of antecedents of governmental behavior. In general, findings suggest that a constellation of state demographic (e.g., enrollment growth), economic (e.g., changes in tax revenues and employment conditions), political (the ideological proclivities of citizenries and party control of government institutions), and governance conditions drive state policy change and reform in postsecondary education. One surprisingly durable finding across nearly all these studies is the significant effect of governance on state policy behaviors. Although the directions of the effects vary across the different policy domains studied (e.g., finance, accountability, or regulatory policies), there is consistent evidence that governance structure indeed appears to influence the policy decisions a state makes, and in ways that can be empirically assayed.

Our own work, in conjunction with a team of colleagues, appears to be the most prolific program of research in this vein. Drawing on the policy innovation and diffusion literature of political science and using event history analysis, we have examined the factors associated with state adoption of many distinctively new postsecondary policies, including performance-based accountability mandates (i.e., performance funding, budgeting, and reporting policies), state unit-record systems, state eminent-scholars programs, governance reforms, and certain market-oriented college financing schemes (Doyle et al., forthcoming; Hearn, McLendon, & Lacy, 2009; Hearn, McLendon, & Mokher, 2008; McLendon et al., 2007; McLendon et al., 2006; McLendon et al., 2005; Mokher & McLendon, 2009). Notably, this work also includes a longitudinal analysis of influences on states' decisions to change their governance arrangements (McLendon et al., 2007). In this last work, we found that "political instability," in the form of fluctuations in gubernatorial leadership and party control of the legislature, is the key driving force behind the governance shifts observed since the mid-1980s. As earlier noted, these studies overall also point to statewide governance as an important source of influence on the policy decisions of state governments in the postsecondary education arena. For example, we have found that the consolidated governing board arrangement often has a strong, statistically significant effect on governmental adoption of certain new policies, including more rigorous performance-accountability mandates (McLendon et al., 2006). Governance structures, it appears, do seem to matter in shaping public choice for postsecondary education.

Clearly, the state governance literature has evolved notably over the past two decades. Once a body of writings characterized mainly by description and prescription, it has recently acquired increasing scope, depth, and analytical complexity. The range of questions addressed has expanded, conceptual underpinnings have grown more multifaceted and become more deeply anchored in the disciplines, and methodological approaches have been substantially modernized and refined.

GOVERNANCE AT THE REGIONAL, DISCIPLINARY, AND NATIONAL LEVELS

It would seem to be hereesy in the U.S. context to suggest that significant governance activity takes place at levels beyond the state. After all, an enduring myth in this country centers on education at all levels being a local responsibility. And the strong resistance to efforts to impose a national quality control regime onto the higher education sector suggests continuing constraints on federal ambitions in the arena (Breneman, 2008). Yet, suprastate governance does exist.

At the regional and national levels, regional accrediting bodies in effect exercise governing control over institutions seeking accreditation within and across academic fields. By imposing standards for undergraduate and graduate education in such matters as faculty-student ratios, library holdings, instructor qualifications, and the like, these bodies exercise some governing control over academic activities in institutions. Participation in accrediting processes is voluntary, but avoiding accrediting associations is a real choice only for institutions with unas-
sable reputations or highly distinctive strategic niches (Boland, 2001). Effectively, for the great mass of institutions, the alternatives to accreditation may well be the imposition of some form of governmental quality control or the acceptance of marketplace marginalization.

Although they are neither numerous nor strongly empowered, other formal governing bodies at the national level also exist. For institutions participating in high-level intercollegiate athletics, membership in the National Collegiate Athletic Association is a necessary commitment that clearly shapes institutions’ athletic policies, staffing, scholarship practices, and procedures (The lin, 1996). Similarly, virtually all U.S. institutions participate in the massive federal student aid programs, and many also receive federal research support, and the respective federal student-aid and research agencies impose regulations and rules that shape institutional structures and actions.6 Absent such arrangements, it is questionable whether institutions on their own would have established institutional boards to monitor research ethics or imposed strict data transparency and privacy requirements.

But, interestingly, these formal governing mechanisms remain quite weak compared with more informal mechanisms. American colleges and universities are indirectly but significantly governed at the national or supranational level. Clark (1983b), Trow (1993), Meyer (Meyer, Ramirez, Frank, & Schofer, 2007), and many others have frequently noted that one can indeed identify a “system” of higher education in the United States. In the main, that system lacks formal legitimation in rules, regulations, and requirements imposed from the outside, but it can nonetheless be determinative in organizational structures and actions. As Meyer and colleagues (2007) observe, “Organizationally, the existence and legitimation capacity of rule-like external models are crucial to the creation and stabi- lization of all sorts of everyday structures” (p. 190), including, most prominently, colleges and universities. Forces external to individual institutions profoundly shaped departmental organization, academic cultures, campus missions, levels of professorial autonomy, faculty promotion and tenure standards, the array of disciplines represented on campus, and the curricular requirements for various degrees. Indeed, the word “shaped” may understate the power of these influences. While a potter might shape clay roughly toward an idealized configuration, Meyer’s external models stamp molds onto the clay, ensuring minimal variations. In place of guidelines endorsed by fuzzily defined actors from beyond campus walls, Meyer and colleagues envision stern rules imposed by societal actors and fields with little tolerance for dissent.

How do these informal but powerful governing mechanisms impose their rule? Ongoing interactions with people and organizations outside the campus are influential, as are the prior experiences and socialization of faculty hired, promoted, and tenured. Clearly, institutions making decisions that defy the “system”’s expectations expose themselves to professional and marketplace sanctions. In this way, nationally or globally institutionalized norms, values, and expectations can literally govern decision making at individual campuses.

There are a number of ways this conception must be elaborated. For one, governing authority can take varied forms, including authority over funding, programs, and approaches to solving problems (Meyer & Scott, 1985). In higher education, the federal government shapes institutional actions through its influences on student-aid and research funding, and the ancillary requirements accompanying those funds, but the government’s authority over programming and strategic approaches is much more limited. Also, while institutionalist arguments posit cross-national modeling of organizational forms and processes (Clark, 1983b), one may argue that the national level is most central. Major differences persist between national higher education systems, even across nations with similar socioeconomic characteristics (Ramirez, 2006).

Finally, in addition to governmental and institutionalizing forces, there is a third suprate state force helping direct colleges’ and universities’ actions. Markets have long been noted as critical agents in coordinating U.S. higher education (Clark, 1983b), but observers (e.g., Karp, 2003) are now increasingly critiquing their growing importance in campus decision making. This country may be seeing the early scenes of an engrossing three-way drama in which campuses’ organizational configurations and processes are shifting toward new forms balancing developments in externally driven market, institutionalizing, and governmental forces (McLendon & Hearn, 2009).

At the same time, as appealing as it is to conceive of organizational action as largely determined externally, it is important to remember that colleges and universities do maintain the capacity to choose. Skillful leaders can effectively employ core values and practices in defense of necessary adaptive change (Bastedo, 2007; Levine, 2000). Market pressures may be ascending, but governance need not be the province of the invisible hand alone.

Governance in a Wider Lens: Some Potential Arenas for Further Research

The preceding review suggests that researchers have made real progress in building understanding of higher education governance. But the progress appears
uneven, marked by spirited attention to some topics, limited attention to others, and diversity in methodological rigor and approach. One can also question levels of communication across institutional and disciplinary boundaries on governance research. While the different social science disciplines share interests in such topics as salary determination, resource flows among units, curricular adaptation, program creation and termination, and performance assessment, their respective studies of these topics vary in many respects. Consider, for example, how differently sociologists, psychologists, and economists view questions of faculty salary setting and its implications for institutional effectiveness (see Fox, 1988; McKeachie, 1979; Toutkoushan, 1999). It is also instructive to consider how infrequently citations flow across journals and outlets in different disciplines. It is almost as if separate teams of researchers were bustling around a single, remote native village, observing rituals and traditions, collecting artifacts, and drawing conclusions entirely independently of each other. The results are troubling: duplication of effort, selective inferences, and poor knowledgeableness regarding important insights from other fields.

These larger concerns lie well beyond the scope of this chapter (and beyond the capabilities of the present authors), but we can identify a number of arenas that appear understudied and warranting of further attention. The list is far from exhaustive but ideally represents a promising sampler for those hoping to advance this field of study.

A Contingency Approach to Governance Structures and Processes

Theoretically informed, empirical analyses of governance remain far too rare. Yet the foundations for such analyses are rich. Bess and Dee (2008), for example, insightfully point to Thompson's (1967) classic conceptualization of organizational action as a potential basis for new work. Thompson suggests that agreement over means and ends (goals) is critical to the nature of decision making. For Thompson, when agreement is on means and goals, decision making is merely computational: What avenues are most cost-effective given values, probabilities, and the like? When there is agreement on means but not on goals, decision making is a matter of compromise: To what combination of means may disparate interest groups agree to direct resources, for example? When there is disagreement regarding means but agreement on goals, decision making requires consensus: What approach can like-minded parties agree to pursue? Finally, where there is disagreement on both ends and means, decision making is inspiration driven.

For Thompson, moving individual actors in an anarchical context away from the status quo may require extraordinary creativity, interpersonal skills, and energy.

Adopting Thompson's scheme (also see Thompson & Tudon, 1959), one can infer that classic bureaucratic/rational forms of higher education governance support the computational work necessary when there is agreement over means and ends. Similarly, reliance on the polity fits the political work of compromise when goals are disputed. Finally, collegia appear optimal for consensual decision making when means but not goals are in dispute. Fitting these ideas to research questions regarding effective modes for governance, one can envision intriguing empirical explorations of the match of governance forms and processes to the nature of the issues being confronted. For example, might a threatened institution with unclear and politically disputed paths to restored health be diserved by a hierarchically driven, top-down process of the kind envisioned in some of the field's strategic "bibles"? But is attention to calculations of programmatic cost-effectiveness really maladaptive when extreme challenges loom? The fitting of decision approaches to specific organizational challenges is an ongoing challenge for leaders and has been too little studied. Case studies of "turnaround" efforts, with attention to what seems to have worked best in different circumstances, make good sense.

Governance and Innovation

Facing new, market-driven challenges, contemporary higher education needs to adapt creatively in many areas, including its approaches to knowledge transmission, its systems for generating new knowledge, its management practices, and its labor force arrangements. In the spirit of Burton Clark's classic essay (1983a), we may ask, "To what extent are governance systems complicit in the ways institutions and systems innovate in response to emerging, pressing domains? What structures of governance fit best?" There are a variety of approaches to the question.

Long-standing research findings in social and organizational psychology suggest that democratically structured groups can be more effective than hierarchically structured and autocratically led groups for dealing with ill-formed, open-ended problems, while hierarchical structures with clear divisions of labor can be superior for resolving well-defined problems (see the review by Perrow, 1986). It would seem not too great a leap to surmise that current conditions facing postsecondary institutions are ill defined and that shared-governance traditions represent a form of democratic structuring. Thus, if the analogy from small-
groups research to university governance holds, we might infer that institutions open to the distinctive problem-solving capabilities of faculty working across units may be especially successful in addressing emerging external challenges and conditions.

Yet that may be too quick and too long a leap. For one, faculty can be largely indifferent to campuswide governance issues, unless there is crisis or threat in the wind (Birnbaum, 2004; Hearn, 1988). At a more fundamental level, many academic constituencies focus on their own subunits' interests and their own professional self-interests rather than those of the larger institution (Kerr, 2001). Thus, to the extent that shared governance contributes to innovation, it may do so more at the level of subunits than at the level of the campus as a whole. As Kerr wryly argues, the only choice that cannot be vetoed at the level of the campus as a whole is to preserve the status quo.

For Collis (2004), the problem centers on a paradox of scope: traditional core units are stable or shrinking, while activities around the periphery are growing (including outsourcing partnerships, vocational courses, sponsored research, licensing and patenting, and affiliated research centers and institutes). To the extent campuswide governance is shaped around the idea that the core represents what is most critical to the institution, governance may falter. Indeed, traditional forms of shared governance that vest authority largely in tenure-line faculty housed in degree-oriented departments may be not only removed from innovative organizational trends on campus but actively resistant to those trends.

Marginson (2000) points to a growing tension between traditional notions of academic governance by a small elite and emerging pressures for adaptation to new organizational values, configurations, and contexts: "Clearly the old idea of collegial governance, whereby academic staff govern the university, administer it and provide some of its auxiliary services, is obsolete" (p. 34). Marginson envisions a new, segmented form of governance and decision making responsive to emerging conditions. His argument is persuasive and merits analytical attention.

However one might view the connections of governance to innovation, it remains a difficult and largely unexplored avenue for empirical work. New research might productively explore the extent to which campuswide governance arrangements may foster or constrain both effective and ineffective innovation.

GOVERNANCE IN EMERGING ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

In the past few decades, public institutions have increasingly turned to new organizational forms, including university foundations, partnerships with corporations, and new self-governing research centers and labs. Some have argued that research centers and labs are becoming a significant new locus of employment and careers in higher education, to some extent supplanting the academic department (Boardman & Corley, 2008). Without doubt, many new appointments are being made in the centers and labs, and many faculty see those as their true academic home rather than discipline-based departments and programs. Similarly, some analysts see emerging research-oriented units such as university-corporation partnerships and 501(c)(3) organizations as important forms commanding new forms of leadership and governance, as well as empirical attention (Geiger, 1993). Research attention to these developments has been limited.

Perhaps the most notable example of an emerging, underresearched organizational form is the university foundation. The foundation form can help connect more supporters and donors to the institution, provide effective mechanisms for separating gift funds from public funds, provide greater flexibility in the expenditure of funds, and allow publicly chartered institutions to seize opportunities not easily taken under firmer state control (Simic, 1998). Foundations often straddle the line between public and private status and often are focused on such areas as intercollegiate athletics, research activity, and core university academic operations. Establishing legal and functional independence from the institution for which they are organized while appropriately serving its larger purposes represents a major challenge for these entities.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN GOVERNANCE

We had inadequate space to explore international governance issues here, but we can suggest that national distinctiveness in higher education systems is being challenged worldwide by increasing global competitiveness and standardization (Huisman, 2009; Maassen & Olsen, 2007). That these trends are affecting the United States is undeniable. Abundant topics for potential research lie here, including impacts of governance changes on institutional missions, quality, programs, access, and pricing structures; the relationship between changing contexts of governance and academic leadership; and policymaking processes and the role of institutions and governance in shaping public choice for higher education at the subnational, national, and supranational levels. Interestingly, there are numerous U.S. parallels to the simultaneous centralization and decentralization currently taking place in much of Europe.

LOOKING BEYOND GOVERNANCE DECISIONS

Pfeffer (1992) has long argued that organizational research has paid too much attention to decisions themselves and too little attention to the factors preceding
and following decisions. The point would certainly seem to apply to higher education governance research. If we focus on evaluating the decisions institutional boards or faculty senates are making, we may exclude a number of intriguing and important issues. Some are arguably foundational to the evaluation of particular decisions. For example, Hammond (2004) has explored the proposition that variations in subunit structures in universities may shape how those units interpret and respond to similar information from central administrators. Structural differences may thus indirectly shape how units communicate with leaders and, in turn, may ultimately contribute to different organizational outcomes. Treating policy decisions as outcomes, rather than as independent variables in evaluative studies, can potentially widen understanding of an arena rather opaque to empirical analysis. And, on the other side of the decision-making timeline, similar policy choices may actually precede quite divergent implementations. In our own work on performance funding (McLendon et al., 2006), for example, we found that characterizing states' policy contexts in dichotomous terms (i.e., a state either has or has not adopted the policy) can mask substantial variations in states' actual funding levels and commitment.

OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

"Sunshine laws" are universal in public higher education and are increasingly influencing private institutions, as well, as governments push for greater transparency in such areas as graduation rate, crime rates, and research funding. College leaders are rarely truly indifferent to the presence of external reporters or to the potential for future public availability of meeting transcripts, but there has been very little attention to openness and transparency as topics for empirical governance research (McLendon & Hearn, 2006a, 2006b). Important questions remain largely unexplored.

Conclusion

In a perceptive essay, Tierney (2004) identified three critical shortcomings in governance scholarship. First, despite some progress since the 1970s, most of it remains nonempirical. As Tierney put it, "what the field needs less of are exhortations and lamentations about the state of governance from either those who want more administrative authority or those who perceive the demise of shared governance" (p. 122). Second, Tierney suggested that far too little research has been conducted on non-four-year institutions and on the governance roles of staff, students, and non-tenure-line faculty. Finally, Tierney lamented inattention by analysts to how well the core purposes of institutional governance are being served.

All three points are well taken, and each poses challenges to the field. Clearly, though, the last question is the hardest. In this essay, we have largely set aside governance's ultimate purposes. Although different parties might agree on a general definition of governance, there is ample room for disagreement on goals. Rosovsky (1990) stresses governance's traditional centrality in shaping teaching and learning on campus, Marginson (2000) focuses on governance's role in helping institutions respond effectively to contemporary conditions, Clark (1985b, 1995b) emphasizes governance's role in facilitating institutional innovation, and Trow (1998) highlights governance's role in helping buffer institutions from political interference. The multidimensionality of institutional functioning, and the complexity of the environmental and organizational factors affecting institutional outcomes, confound efforts to discern governance's effects on goal-serving action and health.

Peterson (2007) has observed that "broad environmental forces and conditions shape not just our institutions but also our industry" (p. 180)—that is, the institutionalized forms and processes of higher education itself. In this sense, governance is both shaped by external factors and one of a complex array of influences shaping institutional outcomes. In such a contingent context, we are far from isolating its distinctive effects, much less answering questions of effectiveness. But empirical research will bring us far closer to that goal than will a continuing proliferation of data-free opinion. Returning to Peterson's (1985) memorable imagery of a quarter century ago, postsecondary governance studies clearly have evolved beyond the stage of "advanced adolescence—maturing rapidly, capable of extremes of sophistication and foolishness, and alternately confident and uncertain" (p. 6). Whether the field continues its march toward adulthood will depend largely on its growing more confident in its own identity and commitment to substantive, conceptual, and methodological multidimensionality.

NOTES

1. Distinctions between governance, management, and leadership have been emphasized by Marvin Peterson (e.g., see Peterson & Mets, 1987) and many others and are quite helpful in understanding postsecondary organization and parsing research on these issues. College and university management and leadership are covered in depth elsewhere in this volume and in the broader literature.
REFERENCES


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