

## Futures Project: Policy for Higher Education in a Changing World

These seven abstracts of scenarios are from The Futures Project at Brown University web site ([futuresproject.org](http://futuresproject.org) – find them by looking for “scenarios” under the site index). The scenarios are 5-7 pages, give factual background, look at possible outcomes, and list a series of questions. They were developed in 2000-2001 to serve as discussion tools about possible futures in higher education. The first three describe a hypothetical State of New England.

### *Dwindling Hope: Merit Aid Widens the Gap (2000)*

After initially resisting the use of merit aid in the state aid program, the public institutions found themselves much less able to compete for tuition paying high-achieving high school graduates. The private institutions became engaged in a price war among themselves. After two for-profit out of state universities petitioned to grant degrees, the state began to offer merit aid.

### *The Rise of the Consortia (May 2000)*

It seems likely that the number of consortia providing research collaborations, degrees, and particularly now virtual education will grow, creating a whole new level of competition in higher education.

### *New Providers Help Build a Skilled Workforce (2000)*

New methods were developed for student aid to virtual and for-profit institutions. The Continuing Education divisions of the public universities developed partnerships with several large employers to develop certification courses for the skills their employees need. A community college petitioned to become a public corporation to become free from complicated regulations and to better serve their corporate customers. New methods were investigated to prohibit diploma mills located in other states from offering substandard virtual courses. Increased businesses because of a more educated workforce moved to the state and attracted more students, offsetting the initial enrollment loss in the traditional universities and colleges to the new educational options.

### *Raising the Bar: A P-16 System Aligns Standards (2000)*

All high school graduates will be guaranteed a place in college within the state college system. New high school graduating standards were established, software developed for remedial math courses and that remedial course will not be offered at any four-year institution. Teacher preparation and development was accomplished by the Virtual Professional Development School Consortium – offering a combination of online and face-to-face instruction aimed at K-12 teachers. The state college system began offering virtual Advanced Placement courses, and high-performing university students served as mentors and tutors to selected high school junior and seniors through the New England Scholars Outreach.

### *The US-Mexico Case (2000)*

The Mexican Association of Universities and Higher Education Institution (ANUIES) developed a proposal to reform Mexico's higher education system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Two colleges, one in Ciudad Juarez and one in El Paso) coordinated their efforts through the Consortium of North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC), located in Tucson, Arizona. After initial concerns about the difficulties of offering joint degrees, accreditation, and credit transfers, they found some potential solutions for international higher education collaboration, with governmental financial support, but they are still working on trying to get a joint degree program started.

### *Contracting for Accountability (2000)*

The state contracts to the public universities for services and the former university appropriation process was phased out. The contract formula involves enrolment, graduation rates, and some expenses related to the on-campus socialization of students. The university had to agree to an assessment of learner outcomes and to disseminate all information regarding student performance to the public. The university research continues to be primarily federal, but a state fund is available to the public universities on a competitive grant basis. There is a funding mechanism for outreach activities to apply university research and expertise to community issues. The community colleges are kept as state institution with traditional funding, and the former flagship state university reconstitutes itself as a public corporation.

### *In Search of the New Economy: Encouraging Private Competitors to Fill the Demand for Skills (2001)*

Starting from the basis of a new country (Globalya), it developed a combination of for-profit institutions, non-profits, and branches of existing universities from other countries. The privates offered selected subjects rather than an extensive curriculum. Due to a budget shortfall, annual budgets for public universities were cut and scholarship programs for private universities were cut. Initial plans to offer courses by the internet were scrapped because of too limited of an infrastructure in the country. The previous reputations of the foreign universities increased their enrollments and the public universities enrollment dropped.

--- Summarized by Roger Caldwell, September 2004.