

The Convergence of K–12 and Higher Education

*Policies and Programs
in a Changing Era*

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Editors

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CHAPTER 1

Framing Convergence

CHRISTOPHER P. LOSS AND PATRICK J. MCGUINN

This volume explores the convergence of US education policy fifty years after the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA). At the beginning of the twenty-first century a mix of political, economic, demographic, and technological developments are transforming K–12 and higher education and, with the help of federal policy, narrowing the distance that has long separated the two sectors. This book provides a broad view of the convergence process along with an analysis of the dynamics and policies that have shaped it in the past and that will continue to shape it in the future.

The ESEA and the HEA injected the federal government into the nation's education system, upending the long-standing tradition of decentralized federal/education relations and of fragmented and locally controlled schools and colleges used to self-regulation and comparatively little government oversight. Slowly at first, then with greater urgency, the education sector's relative freedom from federal involvement began to erode in the three decades prior to the passage of the ESEA and the HEA. The laissez-faire relationship was picked apart by judge-made law and emergency legislative action during the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War before finally succumbing to the moral power of the African American freedom struggle and its crowing legislative victory, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI of which "prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance."¹ Each of these events, one building on the other in unexpected, unpredictable ways, buffeted and ultimately reshaped American education, setting the table for the enactment of the ESEA and the HEA.²

The opening wedge in President Lyndon Johnson’s “unconditional war on poverty”—signed just months apart in the spring and summer of 1965 following his landslide victory in the 1964 election—the ESEA and the HEA, many believed, were the culmination of the decades-long reconstruction of the federal/education partnership.³ The laws were cast as wellsprings of opportunity that would provide millions of young people—especially poor young people—with a shot at a quality education and a better life. “Every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has ability to take,” declared Johnson, a school-teacher-turned-politician from the poor hill country of Texas. “We want this not only for his sake—but for the nation’s sake. Nothing matters more to the future of our country . . . for freedom is fragile if citizens are ignorant.”⁴

Johnson’s signature education legislation provided millions of young people with unprecedented support for improved educational opportunities and services. The substantive and political impact of both acts has been enormous. In 2015 the federal government spent \$38 billion on K–12 education and \$76 billion on higher education, including student aid and research support.⁵ Money only tells part of the story, however, and probably not the most important part. For the two laws have also restructured education governance and policy making in ways that could never have been anticipated—bilingual education, special education, Title IX, and a bursting portfolio of financial aid instruments and categorical programs, to say nothing of all the new interests and institutions that organized to get their piece of the federal pie.⁶ The ESEA and the HEA generated their own policy feedback loops that inexorably spun out new interest and advocacy groups, new political coalitions and bureaucratic structures, new demands from policy makers as well as from average Americans who wanted the best educational opportunities for their children too. In short, the ESEA and the HEA fueled the new politics of American education that this book explores. Over the past several decades, the precise dimensions of this new politics have come into focus as policy makers and the public alike, concerned over the perceived inadequacies of the education system, have shifted the scope of federal action from inputs and opportunity to outputs and accountability.⁷

The goal of this volume is to understand the new politics of education by examining the convergence of K–12 and higher education. With 90 percent of high school graduates now expressing interest in further education, it is

no longer possible to think of one sector absent the other. The chapters that follow reveal how K–12 and higher education are connected and what that connection means for students and their families, for educational institutions, for the workforce, and for our society and world. By thinking of both the education system and the policies that govern it as a single pipeline—albeit a circuitous one with many traps and leaks—this volume considers the mix of social, political, and economic forces pushing that system toward convergence. Today, variants of the K–12 education reform model are being applied to higher education even as the growing diversity of K–12 providers increasingly mimics that found in higher education. New collaborations and areas of cross-fertilization are connecting K–12 and higher education in creative ways that make this a propitious time for an integrated and synthesized assessment of the sort provided here.

TOWARD A K–16 SYSTEM

During the two decades after the passage of the ESEA and the HEA, K–12 and higher education policy continued to be governed by decidedly distinct and separate policy regimes. The workings of America’s educational federalism—the division of governing authority among national, state, and local entities—mitigated a more coordinated federal role until the dawn of the “Reagan Revolution.” This was ironic, because President Ronald Reagan ran against “big government” in his 1980 campaign, promising to roll back the New Deal and Great Society welfare state and famously declaring in his first inaugural address that “government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.”⁸

In due course the Reagan administration cut taxes and frayed threads of the social safety net but never succeeded in substantially decreasing the government’s role in education.⁹ Indeed, the opposite occurred following the 1983 release of the widely publicized *A Nation at Risk* report by the very Department of Education that candidate Reagan had vowed to destroy. The study was commissioned by Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, and its findings sent shockwaves across the nation. In colorful, if occasionally hyperbolic, prose the report warned that “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens the very future of our Nation.”¹⁰ The future of America’s global

military and economic leadership lay in the balance. The findings were stark: twenty-three million adults were functionally illiterate, and SAT scores had been in decline for two decades. In response, the report recommended a return to basics, longer school days, better teacher preparation, and the creation of “rigorous and measurable” academic performance standards.¹¹ As it turned out, this would not be the Department of Education’s last report to shift the boundaries of the nation’s educational federalism by raising doubts about the efficacy of the country’s education system in meeting contemporary challenges.

A litany of education reforms privileging standards, accountability, and choice followed in the wake of *A Nation at Risk*—first by the states and then at the federal level with the enactment of President Bill Clinton’s Improving America’s School Act of 1994 and then, less than a decade later, President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002. The NCLB overhauled the ESEA by instituting a sweeping testing and accountability system that confused everything most educators and scholars thought they understood about the old partisan politics of education. The strong bipartisan support for NCLB, indelibly captured by the unlikely image of a glowing Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) standing behind President Bush at the signing ceremony, hinted at the new educational politics. It was the rarest of feats in our era of gridlock and acrimony to see Democrats and Republicans agree on NCLB, the basics of which are, by this point, well known: in exchange for Title I funding, states had to annually test students in math and reading in grades 3–8 and once in high school, and all students were had to be “proficient” in these subjects by 2014.¹² Schools that failed to make “Adequate Yearly Progress” faced increasingly severe sanctions: staff could be fired, a new curriculum installed, and, if improvements were not made, failing schools could be (and were) restructured or even closed.¹³ The federal hand had never before reached so far into the nation’s 13,500 school districts and the lives of its fifty million students.¹⁴

The shift in federal involvement proved durable. The pursuit of testing and accountability only deepened following President Barack Obama’s authorization of the 2009 Race to the Top (RTTT) program. Part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, RTTT awarded \$4 billion in competitive grants to nineteen states “to improve teaching and learning in America’s

schools.”¹⁵ Grants rewarded state-level reform activities in four key areas: standards and assessments, student data collection and analysis, teacher and principal quality, and school turn-arounds. The administration further prodded states to adopt new policies in these areas through its conditional NCLB waiver program, which released states from NCLB’s accountability regime in exchange for promises of further educational reform. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan claimed that as a result of these programs, “states reached important milestones, sparked significant improvements in teaching and learning, and created powerful momentum for educational improvements across the nation.”¹⁶ Further research will be required before the degree of lasting “improvement” can be accurately determined.

In the meantime, there can be no doubt that the RTTT and the NCLB waiver program built momentum for state-driven education policy reform. By encouraging states to sign on as part of their RTTT and NCLB waiver applications—and leaving the development of the standards themselves to the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers—the Obama administration enlisted forty-five states to sign on to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (to which forty-two states remained committed in mid-2016) and allocated \$350 million in RTTT funding for the development of Common Core-aligned assessments, which about half of the states continued to use as of mid-2016.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the first reauthorization of ESEA since NCLB, was enacted in December 2015. ESSA was hailed as a rejection of the one-size-fits-all NCLB testing model and as the dawn of a new era in education policy led by the states rather than the federal government. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee and a coauthor of the bill, proclaimed, “The huge bipartisan vote—85–12 in the Senate and 359–64 in the House—makes clear that the path to higher standards, better teaching and real accountability will be through states, communities and classrooms, not Washington, D.C.”¹⁷ The law will still hold schools accountable for student success via annual tests, standards, and intervention protocols, albeit ones created at the state rather than federal level. But since the vast majority of states have been operating this way under the waiver program, it is too soon to write NCLB’s epitaph. Testing and accountability measures remain firmly

entrenched, and a majority of states remain wedded to the Common Core standards. Maybe No Child Left Behind has really not been left behind? Only time will tell.¹⁸

What is clear is that within the last thirty years a bipartisan focus on education “reform” has taken hold within both political parties and across four consecutive presidential administrations, and it has altered the *entire* education policy landscape, including higher education. Once impervious to outside interference, the higher education sector has experienced diminished autonomy in recent years as policy makers, families, and students have raised questions about its operation.

First, some background. The higher education sector is big and still growing. Now enrolling twenty million students from the United States and around the world, the roughly 4,700 degree-granting institutions that comprise it can be best understood as a key government adjunct that turns state and federal subsidies and tax expenditures into expert credentials and cutting-edge research to accommodate the nation’s changing labor market and research needs. That said, the sector has many infirmities, as has been amply documented by researchers and the media over the last several years. Rising costs, declining public investment, slapdash accountability, and widely divergent rates of matriculation and graduation, depending on student demographics and institutional profiles, can be counted among the system’s most pressing challenges. Indeed, the story of American higher education must address the sector’s strengths and weaknesses as well as its transformation from an uncoordinated and poorly funded collection of private denominational colleges in the nineteenth century to a resource-intensive system of public-private institutions in the twentieth century. Its decentralized structure and diverse assortment of missions and types—including for-profit and nonprofit vocational schools and institutes, community colleges, tribal colleges, liberal arts colleges, and research universities—has made the higher education sector resistant to regulation.

But this is changing. The K–12 accountability policy paradigm, and the deep sense of skepticism at its core, has in recent years worked its way up the education ladder and penetrated the higher education sector. Currently, higher education is experiencing diminished autonomy akin to the loss of professional control in K–12 schooling that began in the 1980s. According to political scientist Jeffrey Henig, a contributor to this volume, it was in the

1980s when governors and legislatures, in response to the perceived educational crisis brought to the fore by the release of *A Nation at Risk*, responded with new centralized mandates, programs, and assessments. Henig chronicles the turn away from a narrow range of “single-purpose” education policy-making bodies (such as school boards and state education commissions) toward a volatile and competitive mix of “general purpose” policy-making institutions—from think tanks and advocacy groups to teacher unions and elected officials, among countless others—a phenomenon he refers to as the “end of exceptionalism in education.”¹⁹

An end to exceptionalism has also come home to the higher education sector after years of relative equanimity. Although the federal role in K–12 receives more attention, government at all levels, including the federal level, has been engaged in coordinating and funding higher education since the middle of the nineteenth century—a century before it got interested in K–12. In the throes of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Land-Grant Act in 1862, which propelled the government into the higher education business. Support for public land-grant colleges and agricultural research led to additional federal commitments for extension and vocational education. But the big turning point was World War II, when the federal government doubled down on higher education and the citizens and scholars that it produced, pumping unimagined sums of money (\$4.5–5 billion) into defense research and tuition subsidies for returning veterans under the GI Bill of 1944. And then the National Defense Education Act of 1958 thrust the government into the student loan business years before the HEA bundled that program together with new work study and grant instruments that helped reinvent the way students and their families paid for a college education.²⁰ By the mid-1970s a golden age of college access had arrived; the HEA’s portable Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (renamed the Federal Pell Grant Program in 1980) actually covered half the cost of a college education, as it was intended to do, and African Americans and other minority groups reaped the benefits of the legislation’s commitment to equal opportunity. However, this golden age did not last long. By the 1980s loans eclipsed grants as the government’s preferred aid instrument, supplemented later by tax credits, tax-deferred 529 college savings plans, and state and institutional merit aid programs that disproportionately benefited middle- and upper-income families.²¹

The past decade has witnessed the expansion of various K–12 inspired plans to tie aid to costs, value, and quality—that is, to hold American higher education accountable for its performance. Once again, it was a 2006 federal study, compounded by political and economic developments, that crystallized the deficiencies in the sector. Like *A Nation at Risk* before it, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of US Higher Education*, better known as the Spellings Report after Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, sent out a clarion call for NCLB-like higher education reform focused on student learning and employment outcomes, lowered costs, streamlined financial aid, and better institutional data.²²

Overlooked by many people before the recession, the Spellings Report seemed prophetic after it. Starting in 2008, state-level funding for colleges and universities plummeted, tuition climbed, and government leaders at all levels started taking a harder look at higher education. Republican governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin emerged as the poster child for the resurgence of gubernatorial power over higher education—pushing the legislature to remove tenure language from Wisconsin state statutes, freezing tuition, and cutting higher education funding. To be sure, policy makers were galvanized by concerned students and their families. Reports of spiraling dropout rates (nationally half of all students do not graduate in four years) and ballooning student debt (now averaging \$29,000 per borrower and exceeding, in aggregate, \$1 trillion) combined with claims of “limited learning” in college and, after college, high unemployment have strengthened the calls for the reform of the higher education sector.²³ Those calls have multiplied thanks to the upsurge in student protests over simmering racial and gender tensions on campuses during the fall of 2015. High-profile resignations of campus leaders at Missouri, Yale, and Claremont McKenna, as well as dozens of campus demonstrations, have also contributed to the feeling that, in the words of one political pundit, “higher education is increasingly a house divided.”²⁴

The Obama administration no doubt agreed. During his two terms in office, President Obama did not hide his desire to overhaul higher education. He put the sector “on notice” one year before asking Congress to amend the HEA legislation “so that affordability and value are included in determining which colleges receive certain types of federal aid.”²⁵ While Congress continued to debate the reauthorization of the HEA, the president pushed the Department of Education to create a federal rating system similar to the

report cards already required of elementary and secondary schools.²⁶ And in 2015 Obama announced a plan for “free community college” for high school graduates that became a major issue in the 2016 presidential election—further evidence of the convergence of K–12 and higher education.

Key Terms and Boundaries

Beyond an examination of the two sectors in order to discern shared patterns of development, what do we mean by *convergence*? Convergence theory has been used by scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds to study “the tendency of policies to grow more alike, in the form of increasing similarity in structures, processes, and performance.”²⁷ Much of this work has focused on international relations and global economic development, though educational researchers have also used it to explore the migration, transfer, diffusion, and isomorphism of policies and programs—such as performance funding, merit aid programs, or prepaid tuition plans—between and among different states.²⁸

In a departure from the extant literature, which is sector specific (focusing on either K–12 or higher education but rarely both), the essays in this book cover the entire K–16 system. Building on the pioneering research of Hugh Davis Graham and Michael Kirst, we have conceived of convergence as an analytic framework for exploring changes in a representative, though by no means exhaustive, number of policy areas.²⁹ What new insights emerge when looking at the total system? Why have accountability and outcomes become the new watchwords in American education? How has K–12 shaped higher education? How has higher education shaped K–12? In what ways have the federal and state roles in education changed? These are the types of questions that this book asks and seeks to answer.

Specifically, we engage the idea of convergence as both a *process* to be understood and as a set of concrete *policies* that have created linkages between the state and federal governments and the K–16 system and between and among the various institutions that together comprise that system. Benefits of this approach are that it addresses the real ways in which K–12 and higher education have converged and the challenges this presents and how federal, state, and institutional policy toward the two has converged and, in some cases, diverged and the implications of this for future policy. This approach also lets us examine the continuing gap between those who study one area

and those who study the other and the blind spots and problems this creates. It also considers the promise and pitfalls of emerging technologies to close the digital divide between K–12 and higher education. And, finally, it provides an international perspective, as other nations have treated K–12 and higher education in tandem for some time.

A potential criticism of using convergence as an analytic frame is that in the effort to locate points of intersection, we may oversimplify what is in reality a much more complex story. Avoiding such gross instrumentalism and teleology requires carefully distinguishing between policy *creation*, on the one hand, and policy *implementation*, on the other, and recognizing the difference between them. After all, even a cursory look back at the history of American education reveals countless efforts on the part of policy makers to streamline and create a seamless K–16 system only to be disappointed by the results, then stirred to pursue yet new interventions in the hope of greater coherence. The initial efforts in this regard occurred at the turn of the twentieth century, in the midst of what some scholars have called an “organizational revolution,” during the period of rapid immigration, industrialization, and urbanization of the United States.³⁰ This was when the first glimpse of America’s mass education system began to come into view and when the earliest efforts at convergence began. These were voluntary strategies energized by a budding network of national associations, professional communities, and innovative education leaders who sought to strengthen the K–12/higher education relationship in the absence of powerful federal interventions.³¹

At the time, higher education leaders often initiated cross-sector partnerships by reaching down the education ladder to shape the emerging K–12 system.³² College and university leaders understood that the future of their institutions fundamentally depended on the K–12 sector’s capacity to produce college-ready graduates interested in and able to pursue further education. The regional accrediting system that we have today was created with this goal in mind. College educators—usually education school faculty—took it on themselves to inspect nearby high schools to determine which ones produced the best graduates.³³ Accreditors surveyed the quality and credentials of local high school faculty and the curriculum they offered, using the opportunity to advance their professional agenda by giving higher marks to schools that employed ed school graduates.

The rise of accreditation begat a new interest in systematizing high school curricula, and in 1892 the National Education Association convened the Committee of Ten to do just that, appointing President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University as chair. After several years and scads of meetings, the committee issued its famous report, which did not solve the problem of “articulation” but, rather, brought much-needed attention to the idea of curricular “uniformity in the secondary schools.”³⁴ Colleges also began experimenting with new admission tests and remedial education and adjustment programs to assist in the selection and retention of college students.³⁵ Given the amount of institution building and experimentation then afoot, it should come as little surprise that in 1901 the first junior college sprouted up in Joliet, Illinois, as a new intermediary to connect K–12 and higher education. It was the brainchild of University of Chicago president William Rainey Harper, who thought the higher education sector would benefit from a two-year variant aimed at providing vocational and, for a small subset of ambitious but underserved students, college preparatory training.³⁶

Admittedly, these voluntary, local interventions, though ultimately important for the nation’s educational development, provided a rocky foundation on which to build “one best system.”³⁷ In fact, until the federal government inserted itself into the nation’s education system during the Great Depression and World War II, the K–12 and higher education systems remained far apart on most issues and also internally divided along class, race, gender, and regional lines. Nevertheless, we highlight these initial convergence-building efforts for three reasons. First, to underscore the deep-seated desire for convergence among educators across the K–16 system and to display some of the ways in which those educators tried to achieve it. Second, to provide historical context for the subsequent federal interventions that led to and grew out of the historic ESEA and HEA of 1965—the federal government’s first attempt at synthesizing and integrating the sectors by creating and funding new pathways of opportunity to give all students, regardless of station, an equal educational opportunity.³⁸ And, finally, to remind readers that the convergence process remains a product of American history and of America’s unique brand of educational federalism that demands voluntary *and* government action at the local, state, and national levels. As we shall see, the convergence process has been shaped by the creative combination of actors and institutions—of myriad policies and pro-

grams working in and out of sync—in both K–12 and higher education and across the entire polity.³⁹

Our capacious understanding of the convergence process begs yet another, related question: What are the boundaries of the K–16 sector that we explore? After all, to speak of the *education sector* or the *education system* or *education policy* probably obscures more than it reveals; none of these terms comes close to capturing the diversity of institutional types that make up organized learning in the United States. So, are we speaking of public institutions, private institutions, for-profit institutions, or some combination thereof? Building on recent cutting-edge scholarship from across the social sciences, we focus on the latter formulation—namely, the education sector as a politically and socially bounded space governed by federal, state, and local policies and regulations and consisting of a plural arrangement of public-private institutions. In a departure from most scholarship that has tended to draw a hard line between public and private schools and colleges, we blend these in order to better capture the actual organization and operation of our nation’s schools and colleges. Neither the organization nor the politics of America’s educational policy-making system can be understood in the absence of explaining how “private” institutions are shaped by public policy and the rule of law and how “public” institutions likewise seek private advantage that places them squarely outside the ambit of a pure social good.⁴⁰

We believe there is much to recommend that education research embrace a public-private approach.⁴¹ At the K–12 level the steady growth of independent schools, voucher programs, homeschooling, and charter schools, to cite the most obvious developments, reveals a range of institutional forms that are counter to the narrow ways we have tended to think about the composition of the nation’s education system. Long gone is the time when common schools and Catholic schools were the only real options available—and the only types of schools scholars studied. Although 90 percent of American students attend a zoned public school, the recent proliferation of alternative educational models, like charter schools, which are publicly authorized and funded but are run by private charter companies, community organizations, and nonprofits, suggests that the simplistic educational landscape of old will not suffice in an era of “no excuses.”

The voluntary and private sectors have long engaged public schools to deliver education and other services to surrounding communities.⁴² We tend to overlook the extent to which traditional public schools depend on private and voluntary action to operate. A few examples will suffice. Public schools routinely partner with private providers to offer before- and afterschool care, food and janitorial services. Parent-teacher organizations play an increasingly important role in fund-raising and in mobilizing volunteer teaching assistants and tutors to help overburdened teachers and their struggling students. Private schools, meanwhile, have long received federal aid for library resources and school lunch programs as well as limited access to special education services and Title I programming for qualified students. And, of course, private schools are tax exempt nonprofits, yet another way in which the government's regulatory apparatus has benefited the private sector.⁴³

The blended public-private approach is likewise applicable to higher education. Take, for example, the public two- and four-year institutions that educate upward of 80 percent of all students. In the wake of declining state funding, now hovering below 10 percent nationally and showing few signs of increasing, leaders at public flagships such as the University of Virginia and the University of Michigan have begun describing their schools as publicly chartered private institutions, even adopting the term "privatization" to describe this process.⁴⁴ In practice, however, the process is far more complicated. For even as public institutions rely more on private funding and support than ever before—whether from tuition revenue, private gifts, knowledge transfer, industry-academic partnerships, or foundations—they still receive billions in federal—which is to say public—funding for student aid and research.⁴⁵

The case for a hybrid public-private higher education model can be seen even more clearly by looking at private universities and colleges. Consider, for instance, that "private" Vanderbilt University receives roughly \$600 million in annual research support—nearly every penny from public sources, and the vast majority from the federal government; that 32 percent of the students at "private" Drew University, a selective liberal arts college, receive Pell grants; that both schools are designated as tax-exempt nonprofits by the IRS. Even "for-profits" like the University of Phoenix and DeVry University, where by law up to 90 percent of their revenues may derive from federal

student aid, benefit from considerable public support.⁴⁶ All of which is to say that while the combination of funds differs at different institutions, the bottom line does not change: the American higher education system, like its K–12 counterpart, can most fruitfully be understood as a public-private sector. Indeed, the recognition of the public-private nature of America's total K–16 system is another example of convergence that this book explores.

VOLUME OVERVIEW

The Convergence of K–12 and Higher Education is comprised of ten additional chapters and a conclusion, and each one embraces a K–16 approach. Although the contributors arrive at different conclusions about the scale and scope of the convergence process, they agree that the phenomenon is real and that it has important implications for the way that education policy is created, administered, and studied.

In Chapter 2, “Governance as a Source of Sector Convergence in a Changing Sociopolitical Landscape,” Kevin Dougherty and Jeffrey Henig provide a deft overview of the convergence of K–12 and higher education governance. While acknowledging areas of continued divergence (as all the chapter authors do), they identify a number of “mandates, incentives, norms, and pressures” that now span the entire K–16 sector: cross-sector bodies, the rise of federal power, the diffusion of general-purpose governance, and the spread of privatization. Their analysis makes clear the growing purchase of the public-private framework within the K–16 governance system.

This paradox is explored further in Chapter 3, “From Helping the Poor to Helping the Middle Class: The Convergence of Federal K–12 and Higher Education Funding Policy Since 1965,” by Adam Nelson and Nicholas Strohl. This study of K–12 and higher education funding since the Great Depression closely tracks how funding models have converged on a privatized approach that privileges the individual over institutions and that has moved from equalizing opportunities and inputs to one centered on accountability and outputs. In an outstanding example of the proliferation of Henig and Dougherty's “general purpose governance,” Nelson and Strohl reveal how the mobilization of new interests challenged the original intent of the ESEA and the HEA and “gave way to policies that focused on quantifiable outcomes, workforce development, and the opportunities and achieve-

ment of middle-income students, often in private institutions with the help of private firms.” Importantly, the authors show how the higher education funding model—focused on the private, middle-class individual and a growing network of powerful middle-class interests and lobbies—reconfigured the K–12 funding model in its likeness.

In Chapter 4, “Individuality or Community? Bringing Assessment and Accountability to K–16 Education,” Arnold Shober examines the ways in which “federal policy makers converged on standardized, external assessment of students for both [the K–12 and higher education] sectors despite the vast differences in the populations they serve.” Although he cautions his readers that there is “no single event that explains why,” pointing instead to the interplay of a mix of factors, the answer he does offer turns provocatively on the pitched, ongoing battle between two opposing camps: “elite educators,” defenders of the status quo who espouse a communitarian outlook, value-laden knowledge, and a pedagogical process that eschews testing, and “federal policy makers,” crusaders of reform who regard education as a “product for individual students” whose utility can and should be assessed. Shober explains how the policy makers won.

Chapter 5, “Teacher Policy Under the ESEA and the HEA: A Convergent Trajectory with an Unclear Future,” pivots the focus from students to teachers. Admitting that “teachers appear to have been an afterthought” in the original ESEA and HEA, authors Dan Goldhaber and Nate Brown explain how researchers and policy makers made the leap from testing students to looking for “value-added” from teachers. They provide a fascinating overview of the foundational research on “value-added” and its relationship to teacher preparation, thus demonstrating the ways in which university-based education researchers and training programs are shaping the next generation of teachers and research on “teacher quality.” Beyond showcasing the key role that new research has played in shaping teacher policy, Goldhaber and Brown also explain how the long-postponed reauthorization of the ESEA and the HEA during the first decade of the twenty-first century allowed the Obama administration to fill the gap by using “competitive grant and waiver programs and by wielding its regulatory power.”

In Chapter 6, “Institutional Assessment and Accountability,” Luciana Dar turns her attention to institutional accountability policies. In an interesting take on this developing national story, she pays special attention to

the proliferation, if uneven deployment, of “market-based policy reforms in both K–12 and higher education that focus on making schools and postsecondary institutions responsible for the improvement of measurable student outcomes.” Despite shared rhetoric and the use of incentives and the proliferation of new regulation, she finds greater divergence than convergence between the two sectors. For although K–12 has been thoroughly federalized, and “higher education’s autonomy has been declining, it still remains significant and constitutes a powerful shield from government interference in its operations.” Dar equivocally concludes that, in time, and if the proper political will is exerted on the higher education sector, “future convergence in institutional accountability policies between the two educational sectors” may occur.

In Chapter 7, “College for All and the Convergence of High School and Community College,” James Rosenbaum, Caitlin Ahearn, Chenny Ng, and Jiffy Lansing home in on the important, if understudied, role of the community college in creating “a single educational system, albeit a discontinuous and poorly aligned one.” Here, Rosenbaum and his coauthors show how the “reigning” policy mantra, College for All, has led to the redefinition of the traditional goals of high schools and colleges by increasing the demand for tertiary education and thus leading to the vast expansion of the community college sector, even though that sector suffers from well-documented performance challenges. They focus on the relationship between high schools, community colleges, and career outcomes. Using the case of Florida’s College and Career Readiness Reform as a linchpin, the authors make the strong case that if convergence is to achieve its potential, then “reform must provide additional high-quality [student academic and career] services targeted to our educational goals.” Considering that the community college is the fastest-growing segment of the higher education system, and that it serves a disproportionate number of underrepresented minority and first-generation students, these recommendations are more than sound.

Chapter 8, “College Access and Opportunity,” offers a sharp account of the original intent of the ESEA and the HEA before they turned into bridge programs to help underrepresented minority students make a successful transition from high school to college. Although proto-bridge programs have existed since the 1920s, and federal support for TRIO Programs dates back to the HEA, author Donnell Butler observes that it was “the

federal government's shift away from equal opportunity to standards after 1980 that may also have unintentionally sparked a greater awareness of an increasing or previously ignored disconnect between K–12 and higher education.” Butler then explores the recent resurgence of homegrown college-based bridge programs, anchoring it in a discussion of Franklin & Marshall College's celebrated Next Generation Initiative, noting that research shows that these programs work even if many of them fly well below the national radar: “local efforts rarely make a media splash, but there are many localized examples of convergence. Colleges have begun to build mutually beneficial relationships with schools, community based organizations, and nonprofits that serve K–12 students.”

Chapter 9, “Preparing Students for College: Common Core and the Promises and Challenges of Convergence,” provides an added layer to the discussion of college preparation by examining the crisis of ill-prepared students and the “promises and challenges” of the much-debated Common Core State Standards in resolving it. Josipa Roksa notes that an overwhelming number of high school graduates arrive at college unequipped for the academic challenges that lie in wait and that this has well-documented consequences not only for students but also for our entire country. Half of all students who enter a four-year college do not earn a degree until year six. A possible answer to this problem, posits Roksa, is the Common Core—“a state initiated and lead endeavor” to create uniform standards in K–12 English and math. Roksa argues that the Common Core, echoing aspects of the Committee of Ten, could go a long way to improving high school education by offering curricular coherence in a system that has aggressively resisted top-down intervention, even when it emanates from the states and not the federal government. One of today's leading experts on college student readiness and preparation, Roksa's conditional suggestion that the Common Core State Standards could provide an “unprecedented opportunity for convergence between K–12 and higher education” bears thoughtful reflection.

Chapter 10, “Technology and Education in the United States: Policy, Infrastructure, and Sociomaterial Practice,” looks at the past and future role of technology, with a particular focus on the role of federal policy in stoking demand for new technological interventions in connecting K–12 and higher education. Of all the possible modes of creating convergence, it is hard to think of one that has created such unbridled hope as well as profound disap-

pointment as technology. Using a sociomaterial framework, authors June Ahn and Bradley Quarles reveal “how social and technical factors combine in human action that results in the adoption of—and has consequences for— new technology in organizations.” They show how various factors converge “as primary and postsecondary institutions influence one another and how education systems change with the evolution of technology.” This chapter provides a balanced view of technology’s role by reminding readers that it is rarely the technology alone but the policies governing it that determines whether and how well the technology works.

In Chapter 11, “Going Global: How US K–16 Education Is Shaped by ‘the Rest of the World,’” Cynthia Miller-Idriss moves our analysis of convergence beyond native borders by exploring the impact of “the global” on American K–12 and higher education. She retraces three moments when the global frame played a constitutive role in reshaping the aims and outlooks of American education at home. The first looks at the role of education as a key bulwark of national security strategy during the long Cold War; the second looks at the influence of international rankings on the trajectory of K–16 education policy; and the third takes us to the post-9/11 world and how the emergence of new global threats have contributed to “structural, organizational, and curricular reforms” across the entire K–16 sector. Miller-Idriss’s chapter helps us understand not only the role of the global in shaping the national education agenda but also the utter unpredictability of global events and politics and the challenges that they raise for the education of global citizens and for the creation of productive K–16 education policies.

The closing chapter, “The Future of Convergence,” highlights the key forces driving convergence, synthesizes the central insights from the contributing authors, looks to the future, and makes recommendations for practitioners, foundations, and policy makers to improve the alignment of K–12 and higher education.

CONCLUSION

The contributors to this volume converged on this project from an array of institutional contexts and professional backgrounds, bringing with them diverse but complementary perspectives. Using an interdisciplinary approach, we attempt to clarify the current policy landscape by pinpoint-

ing the many areas of convergence and divergence between the K–12 and higher education sectors and the policies that govern them. In doing so we aim to erase the intellectually expedient but artificial boundary that several generations of scholars and policy makers have erected between K–12 and higher education. Indeed, independent examinations of the two sectors have become increasingly difficult to reconcile with the realities of the shared educational experiences and institutional practices of our nation’s schools and colleges. Core research and policy questions dealing with educational reform and institutional innovation now span the entire education spectrum, from kindergarten to college and beyond. Simply put, examining the two sectors separately has become counterproductive in an era of “college and career readiness.”

By probing where and under what circumstances K–12 and higher education policies overlap, we hope to make sense of policy makers’ and the public’s ongoing efforts to reform and improve the K–16 system in this country. That said, this book should be regarded as the first word in this conversation, not the last. There are many, many other questions that could benefit from a K–16 analytic frame. Some unexplored possibilities include questions of diversity and affirmative action, teacher tenure and its uncertain future, bureaucratization, foundation influence, corporatization, academic freedom and the First Amendment rights of faculty and students, the spread of vocational and professional education and the concomitant diminution of traditional training in the liberal arts and humanities, administrative justice and student due process, pedagogy and praxis—and the list goes on.

In other words, we hope that this volume will spark a long overdue conversation about the ways in which our historically separated—and separately studied—systems of K–12 and higher education are converging along a number of critical dimensions. We aim to provide readers who may focus on a particular facet of education policy but lack a framework for thinking about the entire K–16 system with a new conceptual approach to help them navigate today’s complex education policy landscape. If we have done our job, then the essays that follow will spur other scholars to approach their own research in a similar spirit and to search for connections and linkages—that is, convergence—between K–12 and higher education.