I thought you'd be interested in reading this book review written by USC President Steven Sample and USC Professor Warren Bennis.

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Money — acquiring it, husbanding it, kowtowing to it — has undergirded American higher education from its beginning. Recently, however, the pursuit of money has become so intense on American campuses that it has prompted a healthy debate as to whether the basic mission of our academic institutions is being defiled by blatant commercialization on the part of universities themselves. Two important new books, "Universities in the Marketplace" by former Harvard University President Derek Bok, and "The University in a Corporate Culture" by University of Denver professor Eric Gould, offer provocative and original perspectives on this debate.

Bok is one of the premier elder statesmen of American higher education and still a very active member of the professoriate. For his newest book he dons the robes of Jeremiah and denounces universities for their increasing commercialization, illustrated by compromises in research standards for the benefit of wealthy corporations and compromises in admissions standards for the benefit of star athletes.

"By compromising basic academic principles, universities tamper with the ideals that give meaning to the scholarly community and win respect from the public," Bok writes. "[Those ideals] sustain the belief of scientists and scholars in the worth of what they are doing. They make academic careers a calling rather than just another way to make a living."

A clarion call to reflect upon the values that sustain the academy is always welcome, and the time indeed may be at hand to establish new safeguards. But in a sense, Bok is attempting to restore a virginity within American higher education that was lost long ago. As Gould notes in his book, "We often forget that U.S. colleges and universities have never been, from their inception, independent scholarly guilds under the control of the faculty." American higher education has always been shaped by an array of market forces. And the money that results from this market-driven approach, when handled well, has purchased freedom and opportunity for the American academic enterprise. It has provided access to advanced education for an astounding number of people who, in any other country, would simply be turned away. Moreover, from a qualitative perspective, it has produced what most observers agree is the finest system of higher education in the world.

Gould’s assessment of academic commercialization is notable for its command of history and its ability to make sense of American universities’ place within the general corporatization of American life. The purpose of this assessment, in Gould’s words, is "to work with the realpolitik of higher education and not assume that the market nature of U.S. university culture is going to change."

Gould, raised and educated in New Zealand and Britain, demonstrates a fine sense of the tension between ideals and pragmatism within the American academy, admitting to "a real affection for the remarkable energy and utilitarian hopes of American higher education." He makes a fundamental point that most analysts of academic commercialization miss: The unsurpassed access that Americans have to higher education has unavoidably made it into something of a commodity.

In reality, the Pandora’s Box of commercialization within higher education was opened long ago, and the result has not been all bad. Critics once feared that the Land-Grant Acts, first signed into law in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln, would dilute the ideal of the classical liberal education with a commercialized focus on vocational training. Yet those acts opened up higher education of excellent quality to millions of Americans and provided a boost to the economy of the United States through agricultural research and extension.

Cardinal John Henry Newman argued eloquently in the mid-19th century that a university was the proper home for knowledge, debate and stimulation of the public mind, not for utilitarian research in the sciences and technologies. Yet as Clark Kerr noted in his seminal "The Uses of the University" (1972), research was becoming a focus of universities even as Newman’s pen hit paper.

One of the most important changes in American higher education occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and is commonly referred to by historians today as the Academic Revolution. It witnessed the introduction of research as an end in itself into the American university (beyond what was already occurring in agriculture) and the emergence of the Ph.D. degree as the terminal academic credential for university faculty.

As Bok notes, research became even more important to American universities during and after World War II, due to the federal government’s decision to rely on universities as the nation’s primary performers of basic research. Since then, tens of billions of dollars for research have flowed into university campuses, with all sorts of federal strings attached in such unrelated areas as women’s athletics and student privacy. Yet Harvard, USC and other leading research universities have willingly accepted the loss of autonomy that federal funding involves. Along the way, the research missions of these universities have been advanced dramatically by the influx of huge amounts of federal funds.

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Much of Bok's concern about the potential for degrading universities' academic mission can be tied to Newman's ideals. Yet such ideals have traction only in nations in which earning a university degree is a privilege reserved for the few. The United States is not such a nation. Gould offers some stunning statistics: Between 1950 and 2000, the number of colleges and universities in the United States more than doubled, from 1,800 to 3,900. In 1900, about 29,000 college degrees were awarded; the figure rose to half a million by 1950 and to 2 million by 2000.

While Bok worries that the commercialization of the academy is eroding public trust, Gould notes that students and parents are more pragmatic, primarily concerned with cost and value. Thus the contemporary university has become an active participant in the marketplace, acquiring and allocating capital in order to offer new services and programs. And mainly this has worked out well. The adjustment of public and private universities to market forces has made American universities superior to those in other nations, something that cannot be said of America's K-12 public schools, which have been sheltered from market forces with disastrous results.

Bok criticizes intercollegiate athletics as perhaps the first and ultimate form of university commercialization. And he raises some solid points here, what with many universities unwisely joining in an escalating athletic arms race that they cannot hope to win and then prostituting academic standards for athletes while pursuing profits that never materialize. But many of the nation's best research universities, such as Stanford, USC, UCLA, Duke and Michigan, manage to field very competitive teams while graduating a high percentage of their athletes.

Clark Kerr observed that, since 1520, only about 85 institutions have remained continuously in existence. They include several Swiss cantons, the Roman Catholic Church and the parliaments of the Isle of Man, Iceland and Britain. But about 70 of the 85 institutions that have survived continuously for the past half millennium are universities. In other words, few things last longer or are more resilient than universities. Fortunately, they are not easily destroyed. A good university is like the Mississippi River. It is fluid, broad and can accommodate many changes along its shores without being fundamentally altered.

For this reason, many of the fears of the past, like the current fears about commercialization, did not and will not ruin American higher education. The secularization of the academy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did not spell the death knell of basic academic values; rather it established a larger and stronger basis for the free discussion of ideas and for independent inquiry. The addition of research to the academic enterprise did not destroy teaching; rather, it broadened university teaching to include not simply regurgitating the works of others but actively contributing to what is taught, thought and practiced throughout the world.

Virtually every discipline within the academy has been dragged into the public square because of societal needs. Contemporary organizations are so complex and fluid that those who manage and govern them cannot survive without the aid and consultation of hordes of university-produced experts in the professions, sciences and social sciences. The transaction has benefited both sides.

More than some can appreciate, knowledge has always been a part of the public domain. The isolated ivory tower is frankly a myth. As far back as the 17th century, scientists such as Newton and Hooke began turning to practical rather than purely theoretical concerns. Robert K. Merton has observed that a survey during the latter part of that century found that Royal Society of London scientists were already spending 60% of their time addressing social and economic needs rather than the lofty interests of pure science.

But while there may be no clear and present reason to fear the implications of commercialization, reform should be an ongoing function of the academy in every era. And in the light of our current Enron era, we should be thankful for the current debate, "seizing the moment," in Bok's words, to make sure that the academy's standards remain worthy. "The purely pragmatic university," he writes, "intent upon increasing its financial resources by any lawful means, may gain a temporary advantage now and then, but it is not an institution that is likely to prosper in the long run." Among Bok's many helpful recommendations are that boards of trustees should create strict forms of accountability for presidents and other university leaders in the context of basic academic values.

Bok's jeremiad reminds one of words written nine centuries ago by the Cistercian monk, Bernard of Clairvaux, in his sharp jab at the prosperous Benedictine monastic community of Cluny: "[S]cattered as we are among the gentiles, are we learning their tricks and serving their idols? I shall speak plainly: Isn't greed, a form of idolatry, responsible for all this? Aren't we seeking contributions rather than spiritual profit? 'How?' you ask 'In a strange and won-

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