MAIN TRAVELED ROAD OR FAST TRACK:
THE LIBERAL AND TECHNICAL
IN HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

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Sheila Slaughter
Research Fellow,
Institute for Higher Education Law and Governance,
University of Houston - University Park
(on leave, SUNY-Buffalo)

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The many recent reports on education have focused almost exclusively on the secondary school. However, the researchers and policy makers involved in preparing these reports and making recommendations for reform do not always see secondary school as an end in itself. Instead, many of the reports on secondary education make explicit recommendations about how to better prepare students for college. Implicit in these recommendations are concepts of what the higher learning of the future should look like. In this paper, we will analyze selected reports so the educational community can carefully inspect their implications for higher education. The reports are as follows: Academic Preparation for College, Action for Excellence, High School, Making the Grade, A Nation at Risk, The Paideia Proposal, and A Place Called School. ¹ We will analyze the reports from a social justice perspective, to see which groups gain and which lose educational ground on the basis of the proposed reforms. The dimensions of the reports with which we will be especially concerned are: access, excellence, curricula, career preparation and distribution of social rewards, research agendas, resources for change, and values.

Although higher education has not received as much attention as secondary, reports on the post-secondary sector are starting to emerge, especially as Congress begins deliberations over revision of the 1965 Higher Education Act. A review and analysis of selected reports on post-secondary education will allow us to compare the implications for the higher learning contained in the
secondary school reports with concrete proposals for higher educational reform. Such a comparison will enable us to see if there is a convergence of recommendations, an emerging consensus about reform of higher education. The reports reviewed are the series issued by the Business-Higher Education Forum, America's Competitive Challenge, Corporate and Campus Cooperation, and The New Manufacturing, as well as the recently released National Institute of Education's Involvement in Learning. In considering these reports, we will focus on the same concerns and dimensions as in the secondary school reports.

Secondary School Reports: the Liberal and the Technical

Although there is great variation among these reports, for analytical purposes they can be roughly grouped into two categories: the liberal and the technical. The liberal reports see secondary education as an end in itself and address themselves as best they can to the general welfare of all students. Among the liberal reports are High School, The Paideia Proposal, and A Place Called School. The technical reports tend to see secondary education as an institution that prepares students for job placement or for higher education, as a place where skills to be used in other settings are learned. The remainder of the secondary school reports discussed here fall into this broad category. The implications of each set of reports for higher education are quite different.
The Liberal Reports. On the question of access, the liberal reports are quite clear. All high school students should have an education that prepares them for college. They are vehemently opposed to any vestige of tracking. High School calls for abolishing all three traditional tracks -- academic, vocational and general -- on the grounds that such labels are harmful. The Paideia Proposal is resolute in its democratic assumption that all students can master a common curricula sufficient to prepare them for the higher learning. Goodlad, in A Place Called School, uses research to argue against ability grouping. He demonstrates that ability or achievement groups do not necessarily help gifted students, but shows they clearly hurt struggling ones. Since this approach to pupil grouping is designed to benefit the poor and minority students who, as a category or class, are most likely to suffer from tracking, it implies that a broader and more heterogeneous population will be prepared for higher education.

Although the liberal reports are concerned with broadening the educational base for post secondary education, they do not see increased access as compromising excellence or quality in any way. Each of these reports speaks out for a democratic elitism, founded on the belief that all students are capable of first class work. As The Paideia Proposal puts it: "There are no unteachable children. There are only schools and teachers and parents who fail to teach them."
Because all students are expected to perform well, they are asked to put in a long day of hard work on a rigorous but common curriculum. Basics are stressed, be these in a "common core," "three columns," or "five fingers." 

Rewards will not be given to time servers, nor even to those who try hard, but only to students who master a clearly delimited subject matter.

The logical implication of this position is that all students will be adequately prepared for college so the pursuit of the higher learning will become a matter of personal predilection. Presumably, more and more students will go to college, where they will have a choice of two tracks. On the one hand, they can further their commitment to education, bringing intellectual values learned in the reformed high school to play -- a commitment to inquiry for its own sake and to the critical evaluation of ideas -- over a broader range of subject matters. On the other hand, they can elect technical or professional courses, but even in courses such as these, care should be taken "to mitigate the barbarism of intense specialization." 

The research agendas for higher education proposed in these reports focus primarily on the educational process. They are concerned with finding ways to use the knowledge we have to train and revitalize the performance of principals and teachers, with discovering a variety of pedagogies for a varied student body, with identifying and replicating effective teaching and learning. They are also concerned with discovering means to solve problems at the local school level through long term planning, curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation of teacher and student...
performance. Thus, the research agenda for higher education focuses on the education process itself, across all levels of learning. While the reports see schools of education as central to this research agenda, especially with regard to the clinical preparation of teachers, the implicit assumption seems to be that the entire university community will participate in research aimed at revitalizing education.

The values espoused by the liberal reports are in keeping with their recommendations for increased access, higher standards, a core or common curriculum, humanistic education together with a systematic exploration of the teaching-learning process. The moral values stressed are cooperation, commitment to the common good, discovery of ethical principles to guide one's life. The political values are democracy, pluralism and the rights of citizenship put forth in the Constitution. There is almost no attention paid to economic values.

Although these values are presented and upheld for their own sake, they are also translated into educational practice. They animate the school room with a belief in the educability of all students, with a commitment to a common educational experience shared across lines of color, class, creed and even ability levels, and through a militant defense of equal educational opportunity. For higher education, adherence to such values probably means expanded enrollment, greater emphasis on liberal and interdisciplinary education or humanizing professional and technical study, as well as a life time commitment to inquiry.
The liberal reports have two outstanding weaknesses: they are somewhat vague about the mechanism for improving student scholarship and they do not address the question of resources for reform. There is some commonality of mechanisms for improving scholarship across the reports -- localized decision-making, strong leadership on the part of the principal, more careful selection and training of teachers, better classroom organization, an improved, core curriculum -- but none of these seem sufficient to deal with the pervasive and immediate problem of low achievement and high dropout rates. Over time and accompanied by significant redistribution of educational resources, these mechanisms might transform education. But they do not adequately address the difficulties faced by students already in the system and unable to reach standards set by district or state. Indeed, the continued failure of such students to perform well during a transitional period might become an argument against the sorts of reform proposed in these reports.

Resources are closely related to the strength or weakness of reform mechanisms. Resources -- whether symbolic, cultural, material or monetary -- are essential for educational reform. Distribution of educational resources is closely related to social class location: the higher the social class location, the greater the share of educational resources, and vice versa. Not surprisingly, students located at the lower end of the social class spectrum are often among those who perform below average in school. However, recent research suggests it is possible to
intervene in class stratification patterns and create greater equality of educational opportunity through enrichment and remedial programs. 10

But, intervention and reform is costly. When the public purse was full, it was possible to channel some resources to working and underclass students, but as public resources become scarce, as is presently the case, sustaining reform would probably mean redistribution of educational resources. Unfortunately, an unwritten law of American school reform seems to say that change can occur only if nothing is taken away from those who already have it. Redistribution, then, seems problematic.

On the whole, these reports give little sustained attention to education's articulation with the economy, whether in the realm of values, or in terms of job, college and career preparation. This oversight may be costly in terms of resources. Over time, the raison de etre for public support of American education seems to have shifted from a political rationale, which emphasized the need for an informed citizenry, to an economic one. The economic rationale for education stresses the relationship of education to the economy, usually in terms of greater productivity and the orderly distribution of career opportunities, more recently, in terms of increasing America's competitiveness in the global market place. Failure to present
reform proposals in ways that address the articulation of education and economy may mean these reports are not treated seriously.

Without meaningful reform, the future of the higher learning implied in the liberal reports is unlikely to be realized. Instead of preparing more students for college work, increasing access, broadening the liberal arts curriculum or humanizing technical and professional programs, and implementing an educational research program, the university of the future might instead look to the future proposed in the technical reports.

The Technical Reports. By and large the technical reports see education as an institution that prepares students for a job or for college. The technical reports claim to seek ways to improve discipline and achievement by more rigorous application of standards. Education becomes a product rather than a process. Techniques for improving product quality, standards, reliability and market competitiveness are explored. This approach to reform obscures proposals for changes in national education policy which have far reaching social and economic implications as well as implications for higher education. Let us consider these implications in more detail, using the analytical categories earlier identified: access, excellence curriculum, career preparation and distribution of social rewards, research agendas, resources and values.

Although all students attend secondary school, the technical reports see only some students as being steered into curricula that lead to college. In contrast to the liberal reports, these
advocate differentiated curricula. Access to these curricula will by and large be determined by testing. The many studies demonstrating that standardized achievement tests discriminate against poor and minority students are ignored, as are studies that show such test performance bears little relation to job performance. Instead, the technical reports advocate increased student testing, especially at transitional points, such as entry to high school or college. The students who test well will receive special treatment, although the word "tracking" is not used. For higher education, such a policy means fewer students, but the students who enter will rank high on the tests that colleges have long identified with "prestige." 

The concept of excellence advanced in these reports honors nineteenth century notions of moral and mental discipline, together with "high tech" furniture of the mind. Like the liberal reports, the technical reports ask for more time on task, a longer school day and longer school year, more homework and no social promotions. Unlike the liberal reports, the technical also explore what sanctions are best used to control unruly, disruptive or uneducable children. Making the Grade, for example, suggests banishment as an appropriate sanction for such students, perhaps to "alternative classrooms, programs and schools," perhaps by providing them "special federal fellowships...to encourage the creation of small, individualized programs staffed by certified teachers and run as small scale academies." For higher education, this attention to sanctions
implies more disciplined cadres of students. Students unlikely to repeat the protests and disruptions that so outraged the sensibilities of many faculty and administrators in the 1960s and 1970s.

The technical reports display a high degree of consensus about curriculum. As in the liberal reports, all students are supposed to master the same no nonsense "new basics": English, the arts, math, science, social science, computers and foreign languages. However, the technical reports imply differentiated treatment of these subject matters based on student ability. The two levels at which students proceed are fairly clear. Those who test well will learn to master literature as the language of upper class discourse, to appreciate and consume the arts, prepare for work in engineering, management and high technology fields where a second language facilitates overseas assignments. Students who do not pass the required tests learn standard English appropriate for office and service jobs, come to recognize the legitimacy of high culture, master computers through key punching, and engage in on-the-job training. As A Nation at Risk notes, one of the functions of the social studies curriculum is to "enable students to fix their places and possibilities within the large social and cultural structure." 15

The implications for higher education are clear. We see them in the detailed elaboration of the advanced or enriched curriculum proposed for college entrants. Students pursuing these curricula will enter college with a high level of technical preparation, especially in math, science and computers. They
will be knowledgeable about the mechanics of these subjects, but also well versed in principles, theories and programming. While conversant with the humanities and able to communicate with clarity and authority, they will probably select a post-secondary curriculum that will allow them to begin building and serving the new technology.

The reports stress career preparation that will route talented students into occupations that will increase U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace, to reclaim "our once unchallenged pre-eminence in commerce, industry, science and technical innovation." This is best done by revitalizing the connection between school and corporation, grooming students for careers in high technology (computers, telecommunications, advanced electronics, biotechnology) and high service (insurance, finance, aviation, shipping, engineering) industries. As is the case with the curriculum in general, career preparation has two quite distinct tracks. Gifted and talented secondary students explore the possibilities of such careers in special classes for the college bound, while the needs of other pupils are met by establishing "partnerships between businesses and schools: team teaching, using teachers and specialists from industry...customized job training efforts...training in the use of equipment; courses actually taught in offices and factories." Thus, all students are prepared for work in the dynamic sector of the economy, but some are prepared for high reward college curricula that will lead to high level management or research
positions in the new technology and others are prepared to take jobs immediately upon graduation from high school, performing de-skilled, low reward labor in service to the machines and systems that constitute the high technology.

For higher education, the career preparation advocated in the technical reports will probably call for long term and substantial reallocation of resources, to deal with the skills of students from high tech high schools, universities will have to develop fields that cater to meeting the problems of corporations engaged in "technological change and global competition." The humanities and social science, along with professional fields that serve the state -- such as social work and education -- will contract, while fields connected with the development of high tech, high service areas will expand. Preparation of teachers in the growth areas will probably occur in these new fields rather than in schools of education. The very shape of higher education will change so it becomes less autonomous and more closely aligned with the economy. And while the research agenda for the sort of higher education implicit in the technical reports is not clearly spelled out, there is enough talk of partnerships between education and industry to infer that the bulk of funded inquiry would serve the R&D needs of internationally competitive corporations.

The values in these reports are largely negative. They translate the worst middle class values -- competitiveness, acquisitiveness, individualism -- from a domestic situation where they are constrained by custom, tradition and law, to an
international arena where the U.S. makes unbridled demands for global supremacy, a continued and highly disproportionate share of world resources, and the power to determine the destiny of other nations. These values are designed to appeal to the heavily voting middle class through their highly charged emotional logic, a logic shaped by a politics of scarcity and fear.

The emotional logic goes as follows. The U.S. economic plight stems from an ill considered, sentimental domestic policy, and also from external threats. The nation is at risk not only from lack of discipline, but from the "economic miracle" wrought by the Japanese and the engineering savvy of the West Germans. Their gains are always America's loss. The U.S. is also presented as threatened by the military prowess of unnamed but undoubtedly Soviet bloc countries. In a world so filled with menace, the only response is competition so rigorous that finally U.S. global dominance is achieved in both trade and arms. To preserve a satisfying standard of living for the future, the U.S. citizenry is asked to sacrifice for the system, giving up chimeras of social conscience such as full employment, educational equity, affirmative action.

What makes the emotional logic the least bit convincing is fear; fear that too much has already been given to others. The way such fears are played upon is perhaps best illustrated by the juxtaposition of "excellence" and "equality" throughout the technical reports. While all maintain that striving for
excellence does not mean giving up equality, there is a strong suggestion that enough has been done for minorities and that further efforts will pull everyone downward. For example Action for Excellence says the U.S. has made "substantial progress" in aiding students "put at a disadvantage by poverty, minority status, or both," and it is now time to "take on another task...building quality." The Twentieth Century Fund Task Force is more direct, saying "emphasis on promoting equality in the schools has meant a slighting of commitment to educational quality." 20

The education practice that stems from these values and this logic is obvious. These reports turn their backs on the education reforms of the 1960s, from affirmative action to remedial programs, and refuse to pursue quality of education energetically. Instead, the reports use the rubric of excellence and quality to call for a greatly tightened U.S. educational stratification system, one that re-values the college degree and re-empowers the middle class.

The technical and liberal reports imply very different futures for higher education. Were the liberal reforms enacted, there would be greater access to the higher learning, probably accompanied by a very gradual expansion of post-secondary education, together with the continued maintenance of a curriculum that contained arts and science, education and social science, new technologies and the professions. Since the great majority of students of the reformed high school would be able to pursue post-secondary credentials successfully, higher education
would probably be less tightly tied to career preparation and distribution of social rewards. Instead, preparation for careers and allocation of reward might move directly to the professions and corporations, freeing the higher learning to concentrate on education. So too, the research agenda for the liberal university would focus on the educational process, preparing students to learn in any site.

Were the technical reforms enacted, access to higher education would be constrained, the sector as a whole would be cut back, with certain fields -- perhaps the humanities, education, and the social sciences -- severely pruned. However, the same or even a greater amount of resources would probably be consumed as costly high tech, high service programs were expanded. Higher education would be closely tied to career preparation, with well specified credentials providing entry to richly rewarded and highly specialized technical or managerial occupations. The research agenda for the technical university would promote national economic growth and international dominance through close cooperation with multinational corporations.

**Higher Education Reports: the Fast Track and the Main Traveled Road**

Some of the recently issued higher education reports make the visions of higher education implicit in the secondary reports more concrete. The reports we have selected for analysis reveal some of the same policy cleavages as do the secondary reports.
One group of reports, put out by the Business-Higher Education Forum, elaborates the "fast track" that would be created from a close collaboration between powerful corporations, great research universities, the enlightened public and forward looking elements among union leadership. The other report, issued by the National Institute of Education, moves beyond the fast track and tries to point the way to a reformed higher education that would accommodate the more peripetetic as well.

The Business-Higher Education Forum "was created for the express purpose of promoting discourse and acting on issues shared jointly by America's business and the nation's higher education institutions." However, the 47 corporations and 41 academic members are hardly typical of most of America's business or the majority of higher educational. The corporation's are among the nation's most wealthy and powerful; many appear in the Fortune 500 and in Dye's list of dominant corporations. The great majority of the universities are prestigious research institutions, often with a technical emphasis. They are about evenly balanced between private and public, and there is also a sprinkling of pretigious private colleges concerned primarily with undergraduate education. The Forum is housed by the American Council on Education, and its activities are funded by foundations and government.

The Forum consists of chief executive officers of great corporations and great universities. The Forum report, America's Competitive Challenge, was a response to President Reagan's request for a position paper on education. Among the signatories
are John F. Burlingame of General Electric, Philip Caldwell of Ford, Robert Anderson of Rockwell International, James E. Olson of AT&T, together with Derek Bok of Harvard, David Saxon of the University of California, Richard Cyert of Carnegie-Mellon and Matina Horner of Radcliffe. The succeeding reports, Corporate and Campus Cooperation and The New Manufacturing, are elaborations on the initial report and form part of an on-going series. The next report, scheduled to be released in Spring of 1985, will deal with business school curricula. These reports, then, can be treated as an ongoing effort of corporate and university leaders to address mutual problems, and the three reports will be treated as a whole.

Although access to higher education is not directly dealt with, the reports quite explicitly address themselves to the best and the brightest, those few most likely to succeed in the global race to make the U.S. the most industrially competitive nation on earth. Thus, the reports are not concerned with mass higher education, or with most institutions of higher education. Instead, they focus on those few research institutions on the "fast track," those universities in a position to advance the frontiers of research in the dynamic sector of the economy.

Excellence is defined in terms of economic success. The Forum begins by clearly stating that the function of the educational system, as well as all other social systems, is
service to the economy. Indeed, America's Competitive Challenge makes only a single recommendation, one that is worth quoting in full:

...as a nation, we must develop a consensus that industrial competitiveness is crucial to our social and economic well being. Such a consensus will require a shift in public attitudes about national priorities, as well as changes in public perceptions about the nature of our economic mailise.  

The conception of excellence as successful economic competition is elaborated in subsequent reports. In Corporate and Campus Cooperation, the Forum tells us investment of R&D dollars in the university pays off when "American industry can successfully commercialize the results." The New Manufacturing seeks research universities able to participate in developing and accelerating investment in the "advanced automation manufacturing processes...imperative if American producers are to survive into the next century."  

As in other reports, the Forum envisions a two track educational curriculum. The fast track has two lanes. First, universities are expected to develop a curriculum for multinational executives, one that would teach foreign management practices, foreign language and culture as well as offer an international studies program designed to "strengthen programs and data bases in the areas of industrial, commercial, legal and financial practices and institutions." This executive curriculum also has provision for government and corporation sponsored mid-career changes for scientists, engineers and managers. Second,
research universities are to engage in high tech R&D that can be quickly commercialized, especially in communications and computers technology.

For the many adults unable or unprepared to enter the fast track, the Forum offers an alternative adult education, one that is especially concerned with the needs of "displaced workers" regularly de-skilled by technological innovation. They will be able to participate in a self-financing national program that offers them "Individual Training Accounts (TIAs)." These accounts are analogous to Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and will enable workers to pay for their own training and retraining needs across a lifetime.

The research agenda for industry-university partnerships proposed by the Forum is clearly articulated in The New Manufacturing. Corporations and higher education must move beyond traditional modes of manufacturing -- batch and mass -- to flexibly automated plants that will use computer and communications technology to integrate all manufacturing functions -- design, engineering, materials handling, fabrication, assembly, inspection/testing, and sales/distribution. These computer controlled factories will produce high quality, specialized products around the clock for specific demand with a labor pool at least one-third smaller and at unit cost of 30-50% less than in traditional manufacturing facilities. Executives and researchers have to get these factories out of industrial and university laboratories and into production.
Given the thrust of these reports, the only career for which students on the fast track should be prepared is business. With advent of flexibly automated manufacturing, high tech, high reward career lines seem to converge. Since management will operate in automated plants organized without many workers, they will need to know less about supervising large groups of people, more about relations between machines and humans and a great deal more about production processes. University researchers will have to be in close contact with corporations for R&D partnerships and technology transfers to work. Independent professions, too, whether doctors, lawyers or engineers, will have to monitor the new technology closely to exploit its discoveries, protect intellectual property and serve as consultants to the new systems.

While career preparation and social rewards for students on the fast track are quite clear, the lot of the ordinary students is less certain. If the manufacturing processes envisioned in these reports are successfully introduced, the work force as we have known it over the last hundred years will change drastically, with as extreme social dislocation as in the first industrial revolution. By its own estimates, the Forum believes that the new manufacturing is likely to result in the loss of anywhere from four to ten million jobs. Since the new manufacturing jobs that are guaranteed by flexibly automated factories will probably be filled by highly educated and skilled workers, the Forum hopes the slack for displaced workers will be
taken up by growth in industries that develop services for the new technologies. Even if service industries expand, the Forum warns that workers will have to compete with machines for jobs and should be retrained to develop strengths that machines do not have. In sum, the Forum hopes to mitigate the social dislocation caused by the introduction of the new manufacturing through education and retraining, but beyond suggesting that as a nation we have a moral obligation to provide fiscal mechanisms (like ITAs) for such education and retraining over a life time, the Forum has little to say about where and how re-education will occur, what jobs students and workers will be trained for, what salaries will go with them.

The Forum addresses the question of resources explicitly and straightforwardly. The American citizenry will pay the lion's share of the cost of global supremacy in the new manufacturing. They will pay by bearing the costs of retraining displaced workers, through allowing industry elaborate and clearly specified tax breaks to "write off" large portions of the cost of industrial R&D and upgrading universities with state of the art equipment. Although corporations will supply few resources, they will benefit disproportionately from direct and indirect subsidy via government financed industrial research and university programs that train corporate executives.

Throughout its reports, the Forum asserts the primacy of private enterprise. If the U.S. is to be internationally successful in its high cost, high tech, high service, high return fields, then all restraints on competition should be abolished:
tariffs, anti-trust laws, environmental guidelines, specifically, and federal regulations, generally. Explicitly rejected as "counter productive" and un-American are alternatives such as "protectionism, national economic planning, income redistribution and plant closing restrictions." Instead, the Forum offers its own version of planning. It recommends establishing a quasi-public planning mechanism, designed to be dominated by the multinational monopoly sector and able to appropriate large sums of public monies to enhance U.S. corporations' economic position globally. The role of the state is secondary and supportive: it is to "create an environment in which the individual and collective talents of the private sector can be focused to meet the competitive challenge." 30

What these reports present is a pedagogy of profit, one so deeply rooted in capitalism as to be blind to any other possibilities. The private sector is paramount and all available social energy and resources are directed toward its well being. The needs of U.S. corporations are unabashedly put before the needs of people and this is justified by claiming corporation well-being is a pre-requisite for economic health. The greatly increased claims corporations make on public resources are justified by greatly intensified international competition. In essence, the U.S. citizenry is being asked to pay, and very dearly, for the triumph of American based multinationals in a world market. As the U.S. populace is asked in the name of economic crisis to devote more education resources to students
already blessed, so too they are asked to tighten their belts in order that already powerful corporations can come to dominate the world.

Somewhat surprising is the apparent readiness of the presidents of great American universities to support the economic and pedagogic logic of these reports. A nineteen percent increase in the federal basic research budget somehow does not seem enough for endorsing a rapacious national economic development scheme that repudiates a decade of liberal education legislation. Perhaps these presidents are routinely following their time honored strategy of aligning themselves with the most powerful and predictable resource providers, especially as start-up costs for new technology soar. Perhaps they have a long term view. If the university's capacity to produce new knowledge can be made more utilitarian and be more tightly integrated with the needs of a science based economy, academe might be able to move to the heart of a corporate-government-university partnership, acquiring power to serve as mediator.

The values embodied in the reports are the survival of the fittest abroad, mitigated by corporate paternalism at home, corporate sector dominance of the state, albeit with provision for consultation by concerned groups, and an uncompromising commitment to capitalism. As Corporate and Campus Cooperation notes, quoting Clifton C. Garvin, J., Chairman of the Exxon Corporation, on management responsibilities, "It is up to us at the senior level to see that the job gets done...Given a clear signal from the top, things will happen."31 The corporate stewards
of our economy are ready to consult with government, education, labor and the general public on policy development, but only if they share a consensus about three basic premises: the need to increase U.S. economic competitiveness in global markets, to enhance the vitality of U.S. manufacturing industries, and to increase automation. Moreover, corporate and education leaders seem to be convinced that business and education exist in symbiosis with capitalism. The Forum quotes Milton Eisenhower, former President of Johns Hopkins, on this point: "Higher education and business are basically interdependent. One needs money to produce educated people, and the other needs educated people to produce money." The educational practice that follows from these values is quite explicit in the several reports: it puts intellect to work in service to the achievement of global economic dominance by U.S. based multinational corporations.

The Main Traveled Road. Involvement in Learning was sponsored by the National Institute of Education, and presented to the Secretary of Education and the Director of the NIE. It is concerned primarily with undergraduate education at four year schools. As the liberal reports on secondary education present a sharp contrast to the technical, so this report contrasts sharply with the Forum papers. Involvement in Learning closely echoes many of the refrains heard in the liberal reports. On the whole, these reports go farther down the road taken by American
educational reformers since the Civil War, asking for increased access, more schooling, and a common education experience that creates community.

Involvement in Learning calls for including an ever increasing proportion of the population in higher education, regardless of age. The report further argues that access and excellence are not incompatible, indeed, that access without excellence robs students of educational opportunity. In contrast to the Forum reports, excellence is defined in educational rather than economic terms. Excellence is to be measured by education outcome -- increased knowledge, intellectual capacities and skills -- rather than by the input measures traditionally used -- institutional endowment and expenditures, intellectual attainment of faculty, test scores of entering students.

The curriculum proposed calls for at least two full years of liberal education, with an emphasis on cognitive development, stressing problem solving, analysis, synthesis and interdisciplinary work. Although these two years are supposed to check rampant vocationalism, little is said about what college should do in terms of career preparation, nor is there any discussion of the economic value of higher education.

As with the liberal reports, the research agenda advanced here stresses exploration of the educational process. The specific research proposals brought to the attention of the higher education community focus on enhancing students learning and growth, faculty development and teaching capability. Moreover, the report suggests that publications that push back
the frontiers of knowledge should not be required from all faculty at four year institutions. Instead, faculty should concentrate on scholarship that attends to the teaching process by integrating their research into the classroom.

The values expressed in *Involvement in Learning* are close to those in the liberal reports. There is a strong belief in the educability of the general population, a conviction that every citizen has the right to a higher education, and commitment to realizing individual intellectual and human potential through education. In turn, education is seen as the key to social and political equity, as providing a guide "for intelligent action beyond the campus." 33

Clearly more public resources would have to be devoted to higher education if the reforms proposed in this report are to be realized. The authors of the report try to bridge the gap between their reform recommendations and available resources by calling for "excellence without extravagance." 34 They propose to raise the level of quality in American higher education by using what we know about the conditions under which growth and learning can be maximized. Thus, the report argues, systematic attention to education research, learning theory and pedagogical techniques can increase quality without radically increasing cost. While this formulation of the resource question might be adequate if higher education were to remain in "steady state", it may be
insufficient in the face of the new demands made on higher education resources by groups like the Business-Higher Education Forum.

Conclusion

The reports we have reviewed and analyzed have very different implications for higher education. The liberal reports and Involvement in Learning move further along the main path of reform taken by American higher education in the twentieth century -- a movement from elite to mass higher learning. They see education as an end in itself and more closely connected with the right of citizenship and responsible political participation than with individual economic advantage and national economic productivity. The technical reports shift the substance of the argument. They speak against increased access and expansion of liberal higher learning on quite narrow and clearly self-interested economic grounds. Before accepting education consequences that flow from the elitist economic logic of these reports, we would do well to follow the advice of the liberal reports and seek to educate ourselves further on these matters, inquiring into alternative interpretations of our current economic predicament. 35


3 These categories are borrowed from Merle L. Borrowman, The Liberal and Technical in Teacher Education; A Historical Survey of American Thought (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1956).

4 The Paideia Proposal and A Place Called School are also against even limited ability grouping, whether for gifted or high risk students. While this position is laudable for its egalitarianism, it creates some problems, especially for students who have trouble with school. High School is somewhat more realistic in developing programs for these students, although the programs proposed run the risk of becoming another form of tracking.


**America's Competitive Challenge**, p. 2.

**Corporate and Campus Cooperation**, p. 6.


**America's Competitive Challenge**, p. 1.

**Corporate and Campus Cooperation**, p. 27.


**Involvement in Learning**, p. 3.


See, for example, Irving Howe, ed. *Alternatives: Proposals for America From the Democratic Left* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

7 High School, p. 127; Paideia, p. 23; A Place Called School, p. 286.

8 Paideia, p. 72.

9 See, footnote five.


11 The technical reports are as follows: Academic Preparation for College; Action for Excellence; Making the Grade; and A Nation at Risk. For full citations see footnote one.


14 Making the Grade, p. 20.

15 A Nation at Risk, pp. 25-26.

16 Ibid., p. 5.

17 America's Competitive Challenge, p. 16.

18 Action for Excellence, p. 35.

19 Ibid.

20 Action for Excellence, p. 44; Making the Grade, p. 6.

21 America's Competitive Challenge, p. 51.