



## Governance of public universities in the U.S.

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### Key Points

- The higher education system in the U.S. is more diverse in its structure than in Germany: Alongside doctorate-granting universities, there are Master's and Baccalaureate Colleges, Associate's Colleges, Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges. There are over 4,000 higher education institutions with a collective enrolment of over 20 million students.
- In both the German and the U.S. federal higher education systems, the main responsibility for higher education lies within the federal states. Unlike in Germany, public universities in the U.S. rely heavily on private sources of income, such as tuition fees and donations.
- In the U.S., higher education university management gained more power over time. This shift weakened faculty senates. The Boards of Trustees in the U.S., representing social and economic interests, have more power than German university councils.

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## Introduction

The governance of public higher education institutions (HEI) has undergone significant change in the U.S. over the past decades. Despite an overall trend towards more autonomy and accountability of higher education institutions, the transformation of internal governance has been polymorphic, due to the size and institutional complexity of the higher education system.

The U.S. system of higher education has gradually expanded since the 1970s. The rate of growth of enrolment between 2000 and 2008 was 25%. In the period between 2000 and 2010, the number of full-time students increased by 45%. Graduate enrolment grew by 33% from 1996 to 2007 (IES 2011). The size of the sector in 2015 was just under 20 million students and will have increased to 22 million by 2023<sup>1</sup>.

In this report, we focus on changes in the internal governance of U.S. public higher education institutions. We especially deal with shifts in the decision-making structures of U.S. universities and colleges and with the implications of these changes for institutional autonomy. The aim of the report is to shed light on the transformations of governance arrangements in U.S. higher education, especially on the complex dynamics between the autonomy and the accountability of U.S. public universities.

The paper is structured as follows: We start by introducing the different types of public universities in the U.S. We then proceed with a description of federalism in U.S. higher education, as it has significant implications for the governance of higher education. Subsequently, we elaborate on the decision-making bodies of U.S. public universities and reflect on their transformation. This aids our discussion of changes in the substantive autonomy of higher education institutions in the U.S. and helps us understand their implications for academic work. In closing, we provide a set of recommendations based on the lessons learned from the observed transformations.

## Public university types in the U.S.

In total, more than 4,207 accredited degree-granting colleges and universities were located in the U.S. in 2014/2015, including 1,583 public institutions (664 granting 4-year Bachelor's degrees) (NCES, 2016). Following the latest 2015 update of the Carnegie Classification and based on 2013/2014 NCES data, 334 institutions grant doctoral degrees (196 public universities, 122 private universities, and 16 for-profit universities). Among the 334 doctorate-granting institutions, 115 have the highest research activity (81 public universities and 34 private universities). In addition to doctoral-granting institutions, there are 763 colleges and universities which grant Master's degrees (273 public, 426 private, and 64 for-profit). Furthermore, 910 institutions are community colleges; that is, public institutions that award the Associate's degree<sup>2</sup> (CCIHU, 2016).

According to the Carnegie Classification system (2010), which is based on the core aspects of institutions, including the degrees conferred, size and setting, the U.S. higher education system consists of the following institutional types: Doctorate-Granting Universities, Master's Colleges and Universities, Baccalaureate Colleges, Associate's Colleges, Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges (Cragg & Henderson, 2013, p. 9).

### Growth of public institutions of tertiary education

The size of the system has been systematically expanding over the last decade. We currently find over 4,000 higher education institutions with a collective enrolment of over 20 million students in the U.S. Out of these, around 40% are public degree-granting institutions and responsible for enrolling three quarters of all students (Cragg & Henderson, 2013, p. 6). The U.S. national statistics office defines a public higher education institution as “an educational institution whose programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials and which is supported primarily by public funds” (IPEDS, para.44). They include institutions at all levels ranging from two-year community colleges to doctorate-granting research-level universities. Around 60% of public degree-granting institutions in 2008 were two-year colleges (NCES, 2009).

Out of all doctoral-granting research universities, most are public (Carnegie Classification 2015). The largest share of their public funding is directed at research, which reflects and supports that these universities are top research performers. Mid-tier universities do less research and receive less research funding. Four- and two-year institutions mainly concentrate on teaching, although some research may be carried out at the more prestigious four-year institutions (Leisyte & Enders, 2013).

The 2010 Carnegie Classification distinguishes between three subtypes of doctoral-granting research universities: RU/VH – research universities with very high research activity; RU/H – research universities with high research activity; and DRU – doctoral/research universities. Research intensity was determined based on a set of research input and output indicators, such as R&D expenditures in science and engineering, S&E research staff, and the number of doctoral conferrals in various fields (Cragg & Henderson, 2013, p. 12). This classification has been revised again in 2015, but, overall, the categories of research-oriented universities have not significantly changed (CCIHU, 2016).

## Federalism and higher education governance in the U.S.

### Federal structures in higher education

Higher education in the U.S. is the responsibility of the individual states in the federal system, even though some funding like science funding and student loans is regulated on a federal level. It is a matter of tradition that each state has a unique relationship between the federal government and the state’s higher education system. The differences reflect different governmental structures, political cultures, and history. Most states have established an entity (e.g. a higher education commission) that is responsible for the implementation of a statewide policy for higher education (McGuinness, 2005, p. 207). As discussed in Leisyte & Dee (2012), massification in enrolment has led many states to create consolidated governing boards or state coordinating boards.

### University bodies with different functions

Key differences between the states lie in the authority and responsibility of state entities (such as commissions or state boards) for budget review, the review of academic programs, public accountability, and in the extent to which these entities are directly involved in institutional governance (McGuinness, 2005, p. 207). Some of these entities govern institutions, while others coordinate higher education institutions (Ibid., p. 208). Boards at U.S. public universities can be divided into three main types:

1. Governing boards with direct responsibility for institutions. This may include strategic planning, allocating resources among institutions within their jurisdiction, developing institutional and faculty policies, appointments, and liaisons between institutions, state legislatures and governments.

2. Coordinating boards with coordinating responsibility for institutions. They focus on the needs and priorities of the state and the system, and not on individual institutions. They act on behalf of both public and private institutions.
3. Planning, regulatory, and/or service agencies which have limited governing and no coordinating function. They carry out regulatory and service functions (McGuinness, 2002, 2003 as cited in Carpenter-Hubin & Snover, 2013, p. 30).

Over the last few decades, the governance of higher educational institutions in the U.S. has developed towards enhancing the autonomy of higher education institutions and more performance-based systems. In 2011, California State Governor Brown eliminated the California Postsecondary Education Commission, the state's higher education coordinating board, as a measure to reduce the state budget. The closing of the agency raised the question of the coordination of the state's three higher education systems and access to the state's college student data (CPEC, 2011; Kelderman, 2011; Keller, 2011). Furthermore, Wisconsin State Governor Walker initiated the separation of the flagship Madison campus from the University of Wisconsin system, giving the campus more autonomy in exchange for a reduction in state appropriations. The Wisconsin state legislature did not approve the plan and instead commissioned a task force to study the University of Wisconsin structure (Stripling, 2011). This reveals that the state may exert direct influence on institutions via state entities, albeit the level of control and the degree of autonomy the institutions have vary from state to state.

Besides guiding and coordinating, funding is another important governance instrument available to the states with which to steer higher education in the U.S. Teaching and researching at American higher education institutions are funded by both federal and state actors. Teaching-oriented, state-owned higher education institutions, like colleges, are funded by the respective states, while research is supported rather by federal funding agencies, to wit on a competitive basis. State support for research is available through a variety of funding schemes. Such performance-based funding has become commonplace in different states. As reported by AASCU (2010) and Kelderman (2012), approximately 17 states have introduced performance-based funding systems as a way to deal with decreasing state funding and increasing pressure to improve performance. In the framework of these systems, institutions are funded based on performance measures such as credit-hour completion and graduation rates.

Some large public research universities receive less than 10% of their revenues from the state (Leisyte & Dee, 2012). Reductions in the share of state funding have triggered changes in the governance relationships between states and universities. Public institutions have generally been provided greater autonomy, but often in exchange for their compliance with new accountability measures. McLendon (2003), for example, found that, between 1985 and 2002, state governments considered more than 120 measures to modify their governance systems for public higher education, the dominant theme of these initiatives being decentralization (as quoted in Leisyte & Dee, 2012). Accountability measures include government efforts to ensure institutional accountability to students and taxpayers as well as third-party assessments of the quality of a university, as defined by various ad hoc university rankings (Bastedo & Bowman, 2011).

At the same time, the U.S. HE system highly depends on private income from tuition fees, private foundations, gifts (such as alumni donations) and the industry. The more income institutions harness from sources other than the state, the more autonomous they are of state control (Leisyte & Enders, 2013). In the competitive

Different levels of  
university autonomy

Financing of research  
and teaching

Interplay between  
greater university  
autonomy and regula-  
tory requirements

Greater independence  
of public universities  
through private  
income

environment of rankings and competition, federal sources of research funding have been vital (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012; Leisyte & Dee, 2012). This has meant that federal sources for research, such as the NSF (National Science Foundation), the NIH (National Institutes of Health) and the DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), whose funds are allocated to individual faculty members, have increasingly become symbolically and financially important for institutions.

Last but not least, when discussing the governance of public universities in the U.S., we also have to consider science policies: A significant amount of research is carried out in research universities in the U.S.

Close cooperation  
between research  
and business

In the early 1980s, the federal government moved from providing basic support for research to pursuing specific policy objectives related to economic development (Geiger & Sa, 2005). These changes in national science policy have driven national research programming towards partnerships with the industry and the promotion of specific types of collaborations. The NSF, for instance, emphasizes collaboration with the industry in many of its larger grant programs (Geiger, 2006). As noted by Leisyte and Dee (2012), the NSF provides support for Industry-University Cooperative Research Centers, which are partially funded by the NSF and industrial partners. In 2011, more than fourty active centers at U.S. universities received funding from the NSF (NSF, 2011). Over the past few decades, universities have come to embrace these actors as part of their entrepreneurial activities (Leisyte & Dee, 2012). Such instruments of research programming have increasingly become important for research universities, as they have emerged as markers of prestige and innovation. Altogether, the income generated by these institutions derives from a diversified set of funding sources.

## Public university decision-making structures

Different structures  
of the university  
management

American public universities and colleges vary considerably in terms of their decision-making structures. Overall, these structures encompass academic, administrative and student leadership. Almost all public universities have governing boards and the following academic leadership bodies: Presidents, Provosts, Academic Deans/ Associate Deans and Department Chairs, and other academic unit heads. Many institutions implement a "shared governance" model, where influence is exercised by the faculty and the management - the governing board and the senior management. Faculty participation in administration includes service on institutional and department committees. Posts in the higher education administration, such as the President, Provost, Deans and Department Heads, are filled with members of the faculty. Deans and Department Heads take on their positions for a limited term, after which they often return to the regular faculty to teach and do scholarly research. In the following, we shortly depict the above-mentioned key positions.

Governing Boards

1. Governing Boards were created to guarantee the influence of lay citizens on the governance of universities. Their task is to oversee the university's strategic plan, set the salary of the President and develop campaigns (Carpenter-Hubin & Snover, 2013, p. 31). Governing Boards decide who will serve as President. They evaluate the President's performance and sometimes dismiss the President if they consider it to be ineffective. They can be called by various names, such as Board of Trustees, Corporation Board, and Board of Overseers. Public officials, such as governors, may appoint members of boards of public universities without serving on these boards themselves. Depending on the mission of the institution, members can represent alumni, the local community, business or academic disciplines (Ibid., p. 28).



President	<p>2. The President is the public face of the institution; he or she interacts with students, parents, alumni, Boards of Trustees, faculty and administrative staff, the media, legislators and donors. Presidents are accountable to the Boards of Trustees for achieving institutional goals in accordance with institutional values (Carpenter-Hubin &amp; Snover, 2013, p. 32).</p>
Provosts	<p>3. Further down the hierarchy of university management, Provosts serve as chief academic officers and usually hold the title of Vice President for Academic Affairs (Ibid., p. 34). The authority that Provosts hold varies depending on the degree of centralization or decentralization of the academic structure of the institution. In some universities, academic decision-making is devolved to Deans, with the Provost performing a coordinating role. More typically, however, Deans report to the Provost. The Provost ensures that resources are distributed to academic departments in line with the goals of the university and that new faculty appointments, tenure and promotion, as well as compensation are fair (Ibid.). The big challenge for Provosts is to ensure innovation and creativity and, at the same time, to guarantee that the university operates within its financial means (Ibid.).</p>
Academic Deans	<p>4. Academic Deans are usually in charge of a school or a college comprised of academic departments. Their role is to provide leadership in the promotion and support of the institution's education and research. They mainly act as chief academic officers (Ibid., p. 35). As a rule, Academic Deans oversee the curricula and teachings offered in their departments and are responsible for student academic advising and career services. They decide which departments can hire faculty and review the promotion and hiring of faculty in their school or college. They are expected to foster a community of scholars and promote collaborations between teachers and researchers (Ibid.).</p>
Departments	<p>5. The U.S. higher education system is a departmental system, unlike the German chair system. Academic Department Chairs are typical of the U.S. system. Each department usually has a certain number of faculty members who are professors, associate professors and assistant professors. Academic departments are responsible for teaching, research, and outreach. Chairs are usually appointed by Academic Deans in consultation with members of the department. They are in office for the duration of an agreed number of years (Ibid., p. 35 f.). They are accountable to the Deans and to their faculty for allocating resources to best support their department's missions. As the Chairs are peers who eventually return to their teaching and research tasks, consensus-building in decision-making is at the core of the Department Chair's role (Ibid., p. 36).</p>
Tasks of Provosts	<p>Regarding the administrative leadership of public higher education institutions in the U.S., again, much variety can be found across different institutions. At the same time, the administration at the top level usually comprises an array of Vice Presidents responsible for various areas. Most of the institutions, including community colleges, would have a Vice President for Research, for instance. In research universities, this position can be combined with the position of Dean of the Graduate School. The duties associated with this position depend on the breadth and depth of the given institution's research activity. Typically, this position would entail responsibilities related to government relationships, compliance, conflicts of interest, indirect cost recovery rates and technology transfer. Vice Presidents are also involved in negotiating research grants and contracts. The performance of any given Vice President for Research is usually based on an institution's success in attracting and sustaining externally sponsored research and minimizing issues related to the conduct of</p>

research (Carpenter-Hubin & Snover, 2013, p. 41). Furthermore, most institutions would have a Vice President for Human Resources. A high position equivalent to the level of Vice President would be the Chief Information Officer. Additionally, one or more Vice Presidents will be appointed for administrative, financial and other business affairs. Other key positions at the top level would include Vice Presidents of Communications, Government Relations, and Development, as well as Chief Legal Counsel (Ibid., p. 40).

Institutions have to strike a balance between integrating directives from external stakeholders, such as state governments, Boards of Trustees and accreditation agencies, and upholding internal governance. This dual structure reflects shared governance. The “participatory governance” model is widely spread among public universities and colleges in the U.S. Processes in institutions are facilitated by a central administration who receives input from faculty, staff, and students (Melear, 2013, p. 50). Checks and balances in the system are ensured through various committees, advisory groups, task forces, and panels. In public higher education institutions, shared governance is cherished by the faculty who insist upon it as part of a well-functioning higher education institution (Ibid., p. 51). On the one hand, this entails prolonged and complex decision-making processes; on the other hand, shared governance is a precondition for a successful organization of U.S. public higher education institutions.

Participatory  
management  
model

The most important shared governance body is the faculty senate. It is composed of professors and constitutes the main body responsible for academic issues. Regarding administrative issues, it shares decision-making responsibility with the university’s administrative structures. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) affirmed the position of faculty senates in 1966, calling for faculty primacy over the curriculum and faculty involvement in internal administrative matters (Ibid.). Their influence on and input into universities’ decision-making increased in the 1970s (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). Over the past few decades, however, the power of faculty senates has been reduced when it comes to administrative matters, and they mainly perform advisory roles these days. They were criticized for their lack of understanding of budget matters and their inability to respond quickly, due to their internal structures and processes (Birnbaum, 1989, Sufka, 2009, Melear, 2013, p. 52). This change in senate power was partly linked to economic pressure and accountability initiatives from state governments. It was also brought about by increasing demands from external diversified funding sources (Melear, Ibid.). Given the limited existing research on the role of senates in university decision-making (Kezar & Eckel, 2004), for instance, it is difficult to draw general conclusions about their role across the whole sector. However, present literature underscores the ambiguous nature of faculty senates. Minor (2004) distinguishes four models of faculty senates found in the US: functional, influential, ceremonial, and subverted. The first type comprises “functional senates” that are traditionally elected. These senates represent and protect the faculty’s interest in academic decisions. They are organized through various committees and led by a chair or president. This type of senate makes recommendations on the basis of deliberation and formalized voting processes.

Role of the faculty  
senate

The second type includes “influential senates”. These constitute legitimate governing bodies and make important contributions to shared governance. They do not merely focus on curricular matters, but also contribute significantly to decisions affecting the whole institution. Administrators recognize their legitimacy as a viable governing body. They can usually be found in universities where power shifts between different constituencies, depending on the context.

The “ceremonial senate” constitutes a third type found in U.S. higher education. They function as symbolic entities, meet on an irregular basis, and contribute to a limited extent to the governance of the institution. In such institutions, the power of the President as well as administrative power is expansive, with senates performing a latent function of professional screening and discussion and providing opportunities for socialization (Melear, 2013, p. 53).

The “subverted faculty senate” has limited power only, as the faculty exerts their power through alternative methods. In such cases, administrators perceive senates as obstacles. Their legitimacy is limited, which manifests itself in a lack of trust on the side of the administrators and management (Ibid.).

### Change in university decision-making structures

Although in place for decades, the structures described above have changed over time in terms of power distribution and the role they play in the internal governance of higher education institutions. Much of the shifts have been preceded by the changing relationship between the state government, political priorities, economic realities and institutions.

Over the past decades, U.S. public universities have seen a decline in the state’s share of institutional revenues, from around 43% in 1985 to approximately 22% in 2014-15 (NCES, 2016). Some large public research universities now receive less than 10% of their revenues from the state. These reductions in state funding have triggered changes in governance relationships between states and universities (McLendon, 2003; Morphew & Eckel, 2009). Public institutions have generally been provided greater autonomy, but often in exchange for their compliance with new accountability measures.

Responding to the changes in external influences, higher education institutions have changed the strategies that guide their operations (Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005): They seek to maximize their prestige and revenues. The rise of disciplinary power in research universities should not be underestimated, as it has had several effects on the universities’ internal governance. Faculty authority was enhanced, especially in departments that were able to secure funding sources that were independent of university budget allocations. As disciplinary power increased, academic policy-making shifted to the department level. Academic departments replaced campus-wide senates as the primary venue for faculty participation in governance. The autonomy of the academic profession was also strengthened, for faculty now serve as intermediaries between powerful external entities (the federal government or accreditation associations, for instance) and the university organization.

While the power of academic disciplines remains remarkable, other elements of the institutional environment now impact on university organization as well. Some scholars suggest that nowadays markets play a stronger role in shaping the forms of university organization than academic communities (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and that universities have been acting strategically by developing new structural divisions, which adjust internal governance arrangements (Leisyte and Dee, 2012). As universities have become more engaged in entrepreneurial research markets, they have established centers and institutes that seek to promote collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to research. These new divisions - called “expanded developmental periphery” by Clark (1998) - are research centers and institutes, technology transfer offices, offices for industrial research, small business incubators, research

Cutback in government core funding –  
Change in university  
decision-making  
structures

Growing influence of  
departments and professors due to new  
sources of funding

Cooperation between  
academic and industrial research –  
Decentralized structures in the state



parks, and distance education divisions. These actors are entrusted with the responsibility to make decisions on their interactions with the external environment. Such a decentralized approach replaces a rather centralized manner of decision-making characterized by multi-level approval processes that often entail time-consuming deliberations by governance committees or administrative offices.

According to Geiger (2006), for example, research universities began to develop specialized structures for technology transfers and research commercialization shortly after the passage of the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980. Technology transfer offices constitute one example of the specialized entrepreneurial structures that research universities have developed to promote knowledge commercialization.

With funding from federal science agencies and industrial firms, universities have also established research centers and institutes in areas such as biotechnology and nanotechnology. These centers serve as venues for collaboration not just between scientists in the industry and in academia, but also between faculty members in different disciplines. While organized research units have long been part of university organizational structures, these new institutes have a distinctive purpose to commercialize knowledge (Geiger, 2004; Leisyte & Dee 2012).

This development implies that decentralized centers can respond more quickly to emerging opportunities in the environment. They are also predicted to turn into independent “power centers” that will have much influence on university decision-making (Leisyte & Dee, 2012, Mallon, 2006). If research commercialization is a central strategy in a university’s effort to generate new revenue, the leaders of these entrepreneurial units are likely to gain power and influence within the institution. Second, if these entrepreneurial units operate outside the boundaries of campus governance structures, their leaders may bypass established decision-making bodies to instigate policy changes that would be favorable to their interests. Rather than pursuing change through the faculty senate, the director of a research institute may seek direct intervention through a Provost or another senior administrator. In this case, the authority of formal governance bodies would be diminished. The power of academic departments is likely to recede as well, due to the fact that many new research institutes tend to be interdisciplinary and are therefore not subject to the authority of departmental committees (Leisyte & Dee, 2012).

As research universities have become more structurally differentiated in order to diversify their resource basis and compete successfully in rankings, new layers of administration have been added (Bess, 2006; Rhoades, 1998). Also, new types of university administrators have been hired to promote and manage university-industry partnerships, develop and market online programs, and measure and assess student learning outcomes (Gumport & Pusser, 1995 as quoted in Leisyte & Dee, 2012). Moreover, accountability and efficiency pressure may have emboldened trustees and administrators to get involved more extensively in domains that have traditionally been left to the faculty, including the academic program development as well as tenure and promotion policies. University trustees and policymakers have criticized the slow pace of decision-making. They have advocated streamlining decision-making procedures, so that institutions can respond more rapidly to emerging opportunities in the external environment (Association of Governing Boards, 1996). Other observers have suggested bypassing existing governance committees to rely on administratively appointed planning groups instead (Schuster, Smith, Corak, & Yamada, 1994, as quoted in Leisyte & Dee, 2012). Further, changes in the boards of universities have been introduced. One of the key developments has been the streamlining of the Boards of Trustees. Accordingly, the number of members on

New decision-making  
processes

Modernization of  
decision-making  
structures

### Short-term contracts – Impact on universities

Boards of Trustees has been decreased. John Hopkins University, for instance, announced that the Board of Trustees was to be reduced from 65 to 35 in 2015, with the explanation that too many trustees would make the decision-making process cumbersome and 'burden' the board (Stripling, 2012).

The third major development in the internal governance of universities is the increase of non-tenured faculty and their limited possibilities to participate in higher education institutions' governance bodies. The 'unbundling' of the academic role of teaching and research has important implications for university governance (Leisyte & Dee, 2012). It can be argued that, as full-time and tenure-eligible academics decrease in number, a smaller share of the faculty will be eligible to serve on governance committees and faculty senates in the future. Thus, the collective power of academics within higher education institutions will shrink, while the role of the administration, especially of the professional management, will increase (Ibid.).

The net result, many argue, is a shift in the balance of power within universities from the faculty to administrators and professional managers. In several surveys, faculty reported that their influence on governance has declined, while the authority of administrators has increased (Cummins & Finkelstein, 2009 as quoted in Leisyte & Dee 2012).

### Public university autonomy

Traditionally, American higher education has had high institutional substantive autonomy. Institutions have experienced a high degree of freedom from external intervention and control (McGuinness, 2015, p. 208). At the same time, their autonomy has always been balanced out by state-defined missions and accountability requirements as well as state regulatory requirements.

### Different degrees of university autonomy

To understand the variety of different levels of autonomy public universities enjoy in the U.S., it is helpful to turn to McGuinness's (2015, p. 212) typology of different levels of state control. He distinguishes between 1) institutions as state agencies, 2) state-controlled institutions, 3) state-aided institutions, and 4) a corporate model of institutional governance. The autonomy of universities is highest in the corporate model of institutional governance, while their control is highest and their autonomy lowest when the university is treated as a state agency. Similarly to other state agencies, universities of the first type are controlled through detailed regulations. As for the second type, state-controlled institutions, the state applies the same budget and financing policies to higher education as to other state agencies, although generally the state acknowledges the distinctiveness of universities. State aided-institutions have substantial autonomy from the state government. The state provides base and capital funding, expecting that substantial non-state funding comes from tuition fees or private giving. Finally, institutions may have the legal status of a public corporation which grants them substantial autonomy. With regard to this type, funding from the state is uncertain: It may not be allocated directly to institutions but to students in the form of student vouchers or grants, offsetting tuition fees (Ibid.). A variety of these types may be found in a single state, given the complexity and different types of public higher education institutions (e.g. research universities versus community colleges). In reality, such a mix characterizes the U.S. higher education institutional landscape altogether, with public research universities usually having more autonomy than public community colleges.

## State-HEI relationships

Three main patterns of state control of higher education institutions can be established according to McGuinness (2015, p. 215):

1. The state uses different levels of control for different sectors: Research doctoral-granting universities are rather 'state-aided' institutions, while public colleges and community colleges are state-controlled institutions (e.g. the University of California, the California State University system and the Californian Community Colleges).
2. All public universities are established as public corporations (state-aided) but are subject to detailed state oversight in specific areas such as capital or personnel. This holds true for North Dakota, Kentucky and the University of Wisconsin System, for instance.
3. Most public universities are established as public corporations (state-aided), but specific institutions are given more autonomy from the state procedural control. Here, states attempt to decentralize governance and diversify revenue sources. In Colorado, for example, institutions may sign an agreement with the state in return for increased autonomy. In Maryland, some universities received increased autonomy in return for meeting specific accountability requirements (Ibid.).

Since state funding constitutes an increasingly small part of a university's income, it has been argued that universities should be given a 'corporate' status and that control from the state should be reduced (Ibid., p. 214).

Recent changes in governance arrangements have implied an increase in autonomy of public institutions in the area of tuition setting and a reduction of influence of the statewide coordinating boards (McLendon, 2003). It is suggested that this trend led to both greater decentralization and greater centralization (Eckel & Morpew, 2009). Decentralization goes hand in hand with greater autonomy of universities from statewide coordinating boards and enables university administrators to set strategic priorities for their institutions. At the same time, such decentralization may lead to the centralization of internal governance if the authority of institutional management is enhanced. Since greater autonomy means greater accountability, the administration gains authority through the usage of various indicators of productivity and efficiency, such as graduation rates and faculty workload (Dill, 2001).

In the U.S. higher education system, higher education institutions determine the employment conditions and hire and fire faculty. Issues of staff are up to the universities, which decide on salaries (negotiated and extremely varied per position, university and discipline). When hiring new faculty members, departments and Deans usually follow a tenure track system where performance and the fulfillment of the required criteria mean gaining tenure and eventually receiving a professoriate position (Leisyte & Dee, 2012). The main regulations to which faculty have to abide are the rules of professional accreditation bodies - in case they work in specific professional fields such as medicine - and the ethical guidelines for research on and involving human subjects. Additionally, the academic staff may belong to a professional union, such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

As noted by the AAUP (2010), the past few decades have seen the failure of the social contract in academic employment. In their view, the tenure system is collapsing, caused by a shift from teaching-intensive tenured appointments to teaching-only appointments

External decentral-  
ization – Internal  
centralization

Increase of temporary  
contracts for academic  
employees

outside the tenure system. In 2007, 70% of the faculty were employed off the tenure track system. Thus, full-time faculty members are now more likely to be in a non-tenure position (teaching-only or research-only) than in a tenure-eligible position.

University revenue-generating strategies have generated faculty roles with teaching-only and research-only appointments. The 'unbundling' of the faculty role (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006) has become evident. Teaching-only positions may be created to provide with staff new programmes such as distance education. Similarly, research-only faculty may work at institutes, allowing the tenure-eligible faculty to continue their work with students while still increasing the research capacity of the institution – the latter being important for the ranking and prestige of the university (Leisyte & Dee, 2012). These changes are in line with entrepreneurialism because teaching-only and research-only academics work on short-term contracts, which can be easily terminated if revenues go down. This allows the university greater flexibility in the development of new programs. This trend suggests that an increasing number of faculty members will not be eligible for tenure and will not have the same protection of academic freedom as previous generations of faculty.

#### Temporary contracts for bigger flexibility

We observe the following key trends related to academic staff in the U.S.: Changing work conditions, an increase in short-term employment contracts and contingent academic staff as well as the greying of university professors (June, 2012).

A report published by the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education (2012) quoted in June (2012) shows that at many institutions poor working conditions of contingent faculty have a negative effect on the quality of their teaching. Institutions often hire contingent faculty shortly before classes begin, which leaves these faculty members with too little time to plan their courses. The lack of instructional resources, such as office space, computers, library resources, and curriculum guidelines, also negatively affects their teaching quality (June, 2012).

Relationships between universities and governmental entities have altered considerably in recent years in terms of funding, accountability, and autonomy. State governments no longer provide the primary means of financial support for public universities. While states have granted public universities more autonomy in the areas of tuition pricing and revenue generation, they have also devised new accountability and performance measurement standards with which public universities are expected to comply. Such pressure to generate revenue and be accountable, in turn, is likely to compel universities to adopt more market-driven strategies (Eckel & Morphew, 2009; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), such as attracting higher levels of federal research funding and participating more extensively in economic development and research commercialization initiatives (Geiger, 2006).

#### Market-like strategies

As noted above, states have reduced their funding of higher education institutions. The relative decline in state support for public higher education is one component of a growing trend towards privatization.

As states have reduced their funding effort for higher education, policymakers have stepped away from centralized control. States are beginning to offer public higher education institutions more autonomy, particularly in the area of tuition setting. With regard to governance decentralization, some states have reduced the power of their statewide coordinating boards (McLendon, 2003). This represents a significant shift in public higher education policy. Post-World War II massification in enrolment led many states to create consolidated governing boards or state coordinating boards

to enhance rationality and efficiency in the use of resources as well as to promote planning across institutional sectors. The California Master Plan of 1960 is an exemplar of centralized, statewide coordination among the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community College system. These forms of centralized coordination have been weakened, with the objective to permit greater autonomy of individual public institutions (Dee, 2006; Dill, 2001).

### Implications of autonomy

Eckel & Morpew (2009) suggest that quasi-markets in higher education and greater institutional autonomy could lead paradoxically to both greater centralization and greater decentralization of governance and decision-making. In this context, Chandler's (1962) classic distinction between strategic and tactical decisions becomes useful. Strategic decisions serve the setting of long-term goals for an organization, while tactical decisions are related to how the organization will implement its objectives. Strategic decisions may become more highly centralized, as university administrators seek to design specific strategies for revenue enhancement and prestige maximization. Tactical decisions, on the other hand, may be decentralized to Clark's (1998) "expanded developmental periphery," where research institutes, interdisciplinary centers, distance education divisions, technology transfer offices, and other entrepreneurial units are able to determine how they will structure their interactions with external resource providers.

A similar quasi-market paradox may emerge at the level of statewide governance. As McLendon (2003) found out, privatization is often associated with a weakening of statewide coordinating boards and a reduction in state oversight of public higher education institutions. This situation may increase university autonomy and give campus administrators more authority to set strategic priorities for their institutions. Thus, decentralization at the state or system level could yield a centralization of governance at the campus level if administrative authority on campus is enhanced via reductions in state oversight. Moreover, these new decentralization policies frequently include provisions for universities to comply with new accountability measures, which monitor various indicators of productivity and efficiency, including graduation rates and faculty workload (Dill, 2001). These new accountability frameworks may enhance the role of campus administrators - at the expense of faculty authority over academic matters. Such frameworks established by state governments empower campus administrators to monitor and evaluate faculty workload and output (Alexander, 2000). Some therefore argue that the privatization of public higher education has led to a growing managerialism within universities (Bess, 2006), which positions faculty as "managed professionals" who are subject to greater oversight by various authorities (Rhoades, 1998).

### Implications for academic work

The effects of such changes on academic work in U.S. higher education have been substantial. While centralized state governance has been associated with lower tuition, greater access for students, and a stronger emphasis on teaching, decentralized state governance has led to higher tuition and a prioritization of faculty research, especially through grants and contracts (Berger & Kostal, 2002; Knott & Payne, 2004; Lowry, 2007).



## Advantages and disadvantages of entrepreneurial management

Since the early 1980s, academic work has become more entrepreneurial and more externally controlled (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). While faculty remain heavily involved in large-scale basic science initiatives, their work responsibilities have shifted to include short-term applied projects that focus on specific social problems or commercial applications. Given their significant reliance on external revenues for research, academics may be compelled to reshape their research agendas in ways that accommodate the preferences of funding agencies and the industry. Moreover, academic work is now subject to greater managerial oversight, and faculty must adjust their practices to comply with directives from campus administrators, trustees, or state officials. Rhoades (1998), for example, argues that administrative management is transforming faculty teaching and research from autonomous activities to organization-regulated work (Leisyte & Dee, 2012).

Paradoxically, however, greater external involvement in the shaping of academic work could create new opportunities for faculty to effect change in the broader society. Through partnerships with the government and the industry, faculty can link their work to public purposes, especially with regard to social and economic problems (Tierney, 2006). Additionally, trends towards the entrepreneurialism and commercialization of research have reinforced the relevance of interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to academic work (Kezar & Lester, 2009 as quoted in Leisyte & Dee, 2012).

Furthermore, pressure from trustees and government officials regarding accountability and efficiency have led universities to develop strategic plans that seek to align internal resource allocations with institutional priorities (Keller, 1983; Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005). Strategic plans may be developed in consultation with faculty, but generally they are products of the work of academic managers whose power has increased. Some would argue that such gains in administrative authority have come at the expense of faculty power (Burgan, 2006; Rhoades, 1998). The rise in influence of academic managers, which some scholars have called “managerialism,” may further diminish the importance of academic communities in the governance of universities (Bess, 2006, as cited in Leisyte & Dee, 2012).

## Conclusions and recommendations

Recent developments in U.S. higher education institutions manifest themselves among others in a shift in decision-making towards stronger authority of institutional managers, with the simultaneous maintenance of strong departments. At the same time, the creation of peripheral centers and interdisciplinary units is another clear trend that unfolds parallel to departmental structures. Such structural differentiation is typical of ambidextrous organizations which provide spaces for exploration and exploitation at the same time (Leisyte, 2015). *It is advisable to increase the flexibility of structural arrangements in German universities to overcome disciplinary silos and increase incentives for collaborations between different disciplines to foster cultural change.*

Shared governance exists in varying degrees in different types of institutions and different U.S. states. The “shared governance” principle is at the core of the university as a professional organization. Innovation is halted in cases where higher education institutions are characterized by top-down decision-making, often due to bottom-up resistance. The mixture of top-down and bottom-up internal governance seems to be the most viable model with which to promote innovation and change in universities (Dee, 2016, Leisyte, 2016, Wilkesmann, 2016). *It is recommendable to ensure in German universities that bottom-up initiatives for change are recognized,*

*communicated, spread across institutions, and institutionalized through dialogue between faculty and managers in German universities.*

Centralization and decentralization have to be balanced out to safeguard university autonomy, on the one hand, and accountability, on the other hand. German states seem to be very demanding in terms of accountability while at the same time granting universities only limited institutional autonomy. *It is recommendable for the German states to provide universities with more leeway in their activities and to foster the professionalization of the administrative staff. This would help ensure the institutions' capacity to face external demands and support internal changes in institutions.*

The tenure track system and differentiated salaries in U.S. higher education institutions are important in attracting talented faculty. Unfortunately, more and more positions are created outside the tenure track in the U.S. higher education system. *German universities should find ways to implement an own tenure track system with performance-based agreements which enables talented faculty to set out on a clear career path towards a chair position (W3).*

Over the years, the U.S. higher education system has developed a strongly professionalized administration, which supports faculty in research commercialization, acquiring external research funding and improving the student experience. *German higher education institutions should provide the faculty with more professionalized support, so that they are more successful in acquiring and administering external competitive research funding, in supporting the administration of teaching and in scouting for new approaches to research commercialization.*

1| According to NCES: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_303.10.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_303.10.asp?current=yes) (last access: 2 October 2017).

2| NCES: [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_317.10.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_317.10.asp?current=yes) (last access: 2 October 2017).

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