Finding “World Class” in Our Universities

First International Conference on World-Class Universities
June 16-18, 2005
Shanghai Jiao Tong University

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Overview

- Who we are
- Ranking System Objective
- Importance of the Analysis
- UNESCO-CEPES/Institute Partnership Objectives
- Future Areas of Study
What is the Institute?

► A non-profit think tank whose mission is to foster access and success in postsecondary education through public policy research and other activities that inform and influence the policymaking process.

► Funded by various private and public sources

► Founded in 1993
Areas of Activity

► Research
  ▪ Student Aid
  ▪ Educational access of forgotten segments of people like prisoners and foster children

► Policy Guidance
  ▪ Financial Aid system for Mozambique
  ▪ Perspectives on Higher Education Authorization by US Congress

► Programming
  ▪ Preparing upper-level administrators to become presidents of minority serving institutions
  ▪ Disseminating the success of a program intended to increase the capacity of minority serving institutions to develop their science, technology, engineering, and math capacity
Ranking System Objective

- Provide policy perspectives on how “world class” universities can make access and success a part of their definition.

- Other objectives:
  - Establish an cohort of elite institutions by rewarding research
  - Improve the research capability of a nation as a whole
  - Identify one’s institution’s place within the growing number of hierarchies to better understand one’s marketing position, and then compete for domestic or international students and grants
  - Train future leaders
Objective of Partnership with UNESCO-CEPES

► Carry on the work of a meeting begun in 2002 in Warsaw, Poland to advance these conversations on ranking systems and league tables
► Provide innovative research
► Contribute perspectives on frameworks that can be used to assess existing ranking systems
► Contribute to the international comparative analysis
► Improve the likelihood that ranking systems will reflect the educational missions of nations and institutions, not vice versa
Importance of the Analysis: building trust

➢ If educational systems are to be transparent, the systems that rank them should also be transparent

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<td>21</td>
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The Pew Research Center on People and the Press: 2003
Importance of the Analysis: limit “strange behavior”

The short-term gains of an increase in high-achieving students and merit-based aid, can create a cycle of decreasing need-based aid, and thus diminish the supply of aid available to certain institutions.

1. Institutions rely more heavily on merit-based criteria within a particular ranking system to modify institutional policy and improve competitive position.

2. Need-based aid goes unclaimed by students who are shut out of more competitive systems by the emphasis on students who also receive merit-based aid.

3. Legislators cut need-based aid since it is going unclaimed. Institutions are then more dependent on merit-based aid, and raise competition for higher achieving students.
Importance of the Analysis:
increase synthesis of “world class” standards and ranking system methodologies

Which of the following processes will dominate?

1. Ranking System Results
2. Standards of Reputable Institutions
3. Consensus On World Class Standards
Future areas of study

- What is the level of usage or significance of the ranking systems in place
  - Measured against other potential influences such as legacy, guidance counselors, price, and aid, what is the relative influence of information ranking systems provide?
  - We can use an online student cohort to test this question
What is the rate of satisfaction with the ranking systems in place?

► How well do ranking systems represent the range of questions that students want to know about their prospects?

► Do matriculated student experiences match the expectations set by the rankings?

- These questions could be answered by creating a cohort of rising seniors (12th graders) and following their progress through their selection onto their matriculation in higher or tertiary education. We would capture the criteria they used and administer surveys to measure the extent to which their expectations were met.
To what extent have ranking systems transformed institutions?

- What is the degree of change that popular systems have effected?
- Are ranking systems affecting the quality of debate regarding educational policy?
  - Information to answer both of these questions could be obtained through case studies of institutions that routinely integrate rankings into their strategic planning discussions. Then we could ask whether these institutions moved further or closer toward their missions.
Thank you for your time and attention.