

# Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University

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## Preface

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# PREFACE

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Who writes or worries about, the North Dakota State College of Science, Daytona Beach State College, Alabama's Troy University, Stonehill College in Massachusetts, or Concordia University in Oregon? Yet institutions such as these make up more than 90 percent of U.S. higher education. *Massification prevails, and the current structure should reflect this development.* (italics added)

*George Keller, Higher Education and the New Society, 2009*

Criticisms of higher education from the Spellings Commission's *A Test of Leadership* to the National Academies' *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* make it clear that the U.S. higher-education system is faced with daunting challenges and burdened by an array of weaknesses. In other words, "we have met the enemy and he is us." Unless higher-education institutions are willing to address the gap between historical deficiencies and current demands for more access, affordability, assessment, and accountability, they face further scrutiny and criticism. Alternatively, the Research Service of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is equally forceful when, in its recent report titled *The College of 2020*, it calls for bold, groundbreaking reforms. The clear message of *2020* is that institutions need to look to the future, not the past. A focus on the inevitability of change, the need for adaptability, and the powerful influence of demographics are key considerations in the *Chronicle* report, which outlines what the college of the future will have to look like.

Irrespective of which perspective is more useful—looking back or looking forward—there is a definite need to provide a "forum" for exploring the role and potential influence of state comprehensive universities (SCUs) as key players in a world where education addresses an ever-growing array of societal challenges. *Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University* is intended to meet that need. In many ways, we are witnessing the second incarnation of the country's "massification/democratization" of higher education. SCUs were a product of the first manifestation of this trend in the 1960s. Most certainly, they will play a major role as one of "the institutions of the future" in accommodating the call for an increasing number of college graduates to reenergize the American Dream. More boldly, as Harry Boyte has claimed in a recent address, SCUs have a unique opportunity to become *the* "democratic institutions of the 21st century." But caution

is in order. As Bruce Henderson points out in his essay in our inaugural issue, this middle child of higher education is filled with both promise and peril. The promise is one of innovation, adaptability, agility, and imagination in meeting the demands of access, affordability, assessment, and accountability. The peril is not being able to overcome the tensions of balancing teaching with research and service, access with quality, internal needs with external demands, liberal-arts education with the growth of professional programs, and institutional mission with the allure of the market. All of the authors in this issue grapple with one or more of these issues in various ways.

The time has come, therefore, to give SCUs a public voice that both addresses higher education's current challenges and helps to shape the "college of 2020." The arrival of *Teacher-Scholar* fills a breach in the literature on higher education institutions that has been left void far too long. The journal's focus will be on sharing and exchanging information about issues, trends, and developments both internal and external to SCUs. Henderson refines this focus even further. He suggests that future issues should touch upon descriptive information about SCUs (what might be called institutional research), policy issues impacting both the internal and external organizational environments, and effective practices at SCUs. I would take this refinement a step further and recommend—much like Donald Hall does in his interesting essay—that because research institutions and SCUs will help to shape the future together, they have much to learn from one another. Sharing and exchanging inter-institutional experiences and benchmarking are potentially valuable ways of using this new journal. I would also encourage readers to think about making contributions that address another crucial, but more recent part of the SCU mission—stewardship of place. This element is certainly folded into the policy function, but it deserves special emphasis as part of the journal's agenda. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) has emphasized this piece of the SCU mission for many years and rightfully so. Never before has our planet so needed the knowledge and attention offered by higher education. As stewards of place in a world constantly transformed by the vicissitudes of "creative destruction," SCUs need to think even more introspectively about how they can facilitate the country's transition to a new society and a revitalized, but different domestic and global economy. Appropriately, AASCU has already begun to ponder the renewal and repurposing of this essential branding element. *Teacher-Scholar* is uniquely positioned to contribute to this rethinking process.

Whether you believe that SCUs should embrace incremental innovation or E. Gordon Gee's universal call at the 2009 conference of the American Council on Education for full-scale intentional upheaval

in the higher education community, welcome to this inaugural issue of *Teacher-Scholar*. The editors invite you to use the pages of this publication to explore the urgent task of helping SCUs transition and transform into the colleges and universities of 2020.

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