

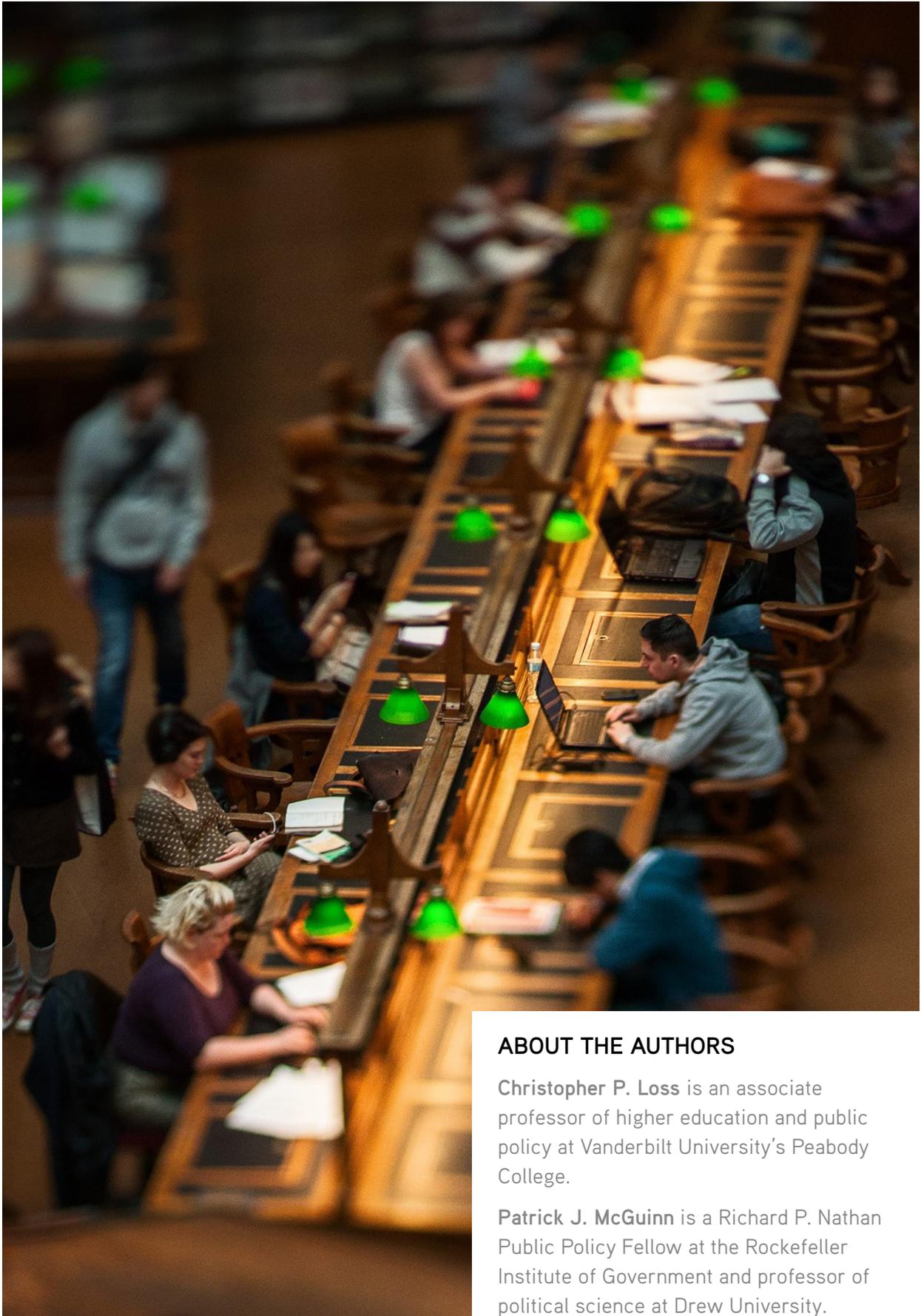
# Convergence of K-12 and Higher Education

Policies and Programs in a  
Changing Era

*August 28, 2018*

Christopher P. Loss  
Patrick J. McGuinn

**Rockefeller**  
SUNY  
Institute of Government



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Christopher P. Loss** is an associate professor of higher education and public policy at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College.

**Patrick J. McGuinn** is a Richard P. Nathan Public Policy Fellow at the Rockefeller Institute of Government and professor of political science at Drew University.



## Introduction

In a recent volume published by Harvard Education Press, [\*The Convergence of K-12 and Higher Education: Policies and Programs in a Changing Era\*](#), we gathered a group of researchers to explore the “convergence” of US education policy fifty years after the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a mix of political, economic, demographic, and technological developments are transforming K-12 and higher education and, with the help of federal policy, narrowing the distance that has long separated the two sectors. The book provides a broad-gauge view of the convergence process along with an analysis of the dynamics and policies that have shaped it in the past and that will continue to shape it in the future.

The ESEA and the HEA injected the federal government into the nation’s education system, upending the longstanding tradition of decentralized federal/education relations and of fragmented and locally controlled schools and colleges used to self-regulation and comparatively little government oversight. Slowly at first, then with greater urgency, the education sector’s relative freedom from federal involvement began to erode in the three decades prior to the passage of the ESEA and HEA. The laissez-faire relationship was picked apart by judge-made law and emergency legislative action during the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War, before finally succumbing to the moral power of the African American Freedom Struggle and its crowning legislative victory, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI of which “prohibit[ed] discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.”<sup>1</sup> Each of these events, one building on the other in unexpected, unpredictable ways, buffeted and ultimately reshaped American education, setting the table for the enactment of the ESEA and the HEA.<sup>2</sup>

Situated as the opening wedge in President Lyndon Johnson’s “unconditional war on poverty” — signed just months apart in the spring and summer of 1965 following

his landslide election — many believed that the ESEA and the HEA would be the culminating act in the decades-long reconstruction of the federal/education partnership.<sup>3</sup> The laws were cast as wellsprings of opportunity that would provide millions of young people — especially poor young people — with a shot at a quality education and a better life. “Every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has ability to take,” declared Johnson, a former schoolteacher-turned-politician from the poor Hill Country of Texas. “We want this not only for his sake — but for the nation’s sake. Nothing matters more to the future of the country ... for freedom is fragile if citizens are ignorant.”<sup>4</sup>

Johnson’s signature education legislation provided millions and millions of young people with unprecedented support for improved educational opportunities and services. The substantive and political impact of both acts has been enormous. Last year, the federal government spent \$38 billion on K-12 education and \$76 billion on higher education, including student aid and research support.<sup>5</sup> Money only tells part of the story, however, and probably not the most important part. For the two laws have also restructured education governance and policymaking in ways that could never have been anticipated — bilingual education, special education, Title IX, and a bursting portfolio of financial aid instruments and categorical programs, to say nothing of all the new interests and institutions that organized to get their piece of the federal pie.<sup>6</sup> The ESEA and HEA generated their own policy feedback loops that inexorably spun out new interest and advocacy groups, new political coalitions and bureaucratic structures, and new demands from policymakers as well as from average Americans who wanted the best educational opportunities for their children too. In short, the ESEA and the HEA fueled the new politics of American education that this book explores. Over the past several decades, the precise dimensions of this new politics has come into focus as policymakers and the public alike, concerned over the perceived inadequacies of the education system, have shifted the scope of federal action from inputs and opportunity to outputs and accountability.<sup>7</sup>

The goal of our volume is to understand the new politics of education by examining the “convergence” of K-12 and higher education. With 90 percent of high school graduates now expressing interest in further education, it is no longer possible to think of one sector in the absence of the other. The essays reveal how K-12 and higher education are connected and what that connection means for students and their families, for educational institutions, for the workforce, and for our society and world. By thinking of both the education system and the policies that govern it as a single pipeline, albeit a circuitous one with many traps and leaks, the volume considers the mix of social, political, and economic forces that are pushing that system toward convergence. Today, variants of the K-12 education reform model are being applied to higher education even as the growing diversity of K-12 providers increasingly mimics that found in

By thinking of both the education system and the policies that govern it as a single pipeline, albeit a circuitous one with many traps and leaks, [we consider] the mix of social, political, and economic forces that are pushing that system toward convergence.

---



higher education. New collaborations and areas of cross-fertilization are connecting K-12 and higher education in creative ways that recommend this as a propitious time for an integrated and synthesized assessment of the sort provided here.

## Toward a K-16 System

During the two decades after the passage of ESEA and HEA, K-12 and higher education policy continued to be governed by decidedly distinct and separate policy regimes. The workings of America's educational federalism, or the division of governing authority among national, state, and local entities, mitigated a more coordinated federal role until the dawn of the Reagan Revolution. This was ironic because President Ronald Reagan had run against "big government" in his 1980 campaign, promising to roll back the New Deal and Great Society welfare state, famously declaring in his First Inaugural Address that "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."<sup>8</sup>

In due course, the Reagan administration cut taxes and rolled back strands of the social safety net but never succeeded in substantially decreasing the government's role in education.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the opposite occurred following the release of the widely publicized *A Nation at Risk* report (1983) by the very Department of Education that candidate Reagan had vowed to destroy. The study was commissioned by Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and its findings sent shockwaves across the nation. In colorful if occasionally hyperbolic prose, the report warned that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens the very future of our Nation."<sup>10</sup> The future of America's global military and economic leadership lay in the balance. The findings were stark: twenty-three million adults were functionally illiterate and SAT scores had been in decline for two decades. In response,



the report recommended getting back to basics, longer school days, better teacher preparation, and the creation of “rigorous and measurable” academic performance standards.<sup>11</sup> As it turned out, this would not be the Department of Education’s last report to shift the boundaries of the nation’s educational federalism by raising doubts about the efficacy of the country’s education system in meeting contemporary challenges.

A litany of education reforms privileging standards, accountability, and choice followed in the wake of *A Nation at Risk* — first by the states and then at the federal level with the enactment of President Bill Clinton’s Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 and, less than a decade later, President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002. The NCLB overhauled the ESEA by instituting a sweeping testing and accountability regime and confused everything most educators and scholars thought they understood about the old partisan politics of education. The strong bipartisan support for NCLB, indelibly captured by the unlikely image of a glowing Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts standing behind President George W. Bush at the signing ceremony, hinted at the new educational politics. It was the rarest of feats in our era of gridlock and acrimony to see Democrats and Republicans agree on NCLB, the basics of which are, by this point, well known: In exchange for Title I funding, the states had to annually test students in math and reading in grades 3-8 and once in high school, and all students were supposed to be “proficient” in these subjects by 2014.<sup>12</sup> Schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress faced increasingly severe sanctions: staff could be fired; a new curriculum installed; and, if improvements were not made, failing schools could be, and were, restructured or even closed.<sup>13</sup> The federal hand had never reached so far into the nation’s 13,500 school districts and the lives of its fifty million students.<sup>14</sup>

The shift in federal involvement proved durable. The pursuit of testing and accountability only deepened following President Barack Obama’s authorization of the 2009 Race to the Top (RTTT) program. RTTT, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, awarded \$4 billion in competitive grants to nineteen states “to improve teaching and learning in America’s schools.”<sup>15</sup> RTTT rewarded state-level reform activities in four key areas: standards and assessments; student data collection and analysis; teacher and principal quality; and school turnarounds. States were further prodded to adopt new policies in these areas by the administration’s conditional NCLB waiver program, which released states from the NCLB’s accountability regime in exchange

for promises of further educational reform. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan claimed that as a result of these programs, “states reached important milestones, sparked significant improvements in teaching and learning, and created powerful momentum for educational improvements across the nation.”<sup>16</sup> Further research will be required before the amount of lasting “improvement” can be accurately determined.

In the meantime, there can be no doubt that the RTTT and the NCLB waiver program triggered “momentum” for state-driven education policy reform. By encouraging states to sign on as part of their RTTT and NCLB waiver applications — and leaving the development of the standards themselves to the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers — the Obama administration enlisted forty-five states to sign on to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, of which forty remained committed to the standards as of February 2016. The Obama administration also allocated \$350 million in RTTT funding for the development of Common Core aligned assessments and, as of February 2016, about half of the states continued to use them.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the first reauthorization of ESEA since NCLB, was enacted in December 2015. ESSA was hailed as a rejection of the one-size-fits-all NCLB testing regime, and the dawn of a new era in education policy led by the states rather than the federal government. Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) and a coauthor of the bill, proclaimed: “The huge bipartisan vote — 85-12 in the Senate and 359-64 in the House — makes clear that the path to higher standards, better teaching and real accountability will be through states, communities and classrooms, not Washington, D.C.”<sup>17</sup> The law will still hold schools accountable for student success via annual tests, standards, and intervention protocols, albeit ones created at the state rather than federal level. But since the vast majority of states have been operating in this way under the Department of Education waiver program, it may be too soon to write NCLB’s epitaph. Testing and accountability measures remain firmly entrenched and a majority of states remain wedded to the Common Core. Maybe No Child Left Behind has really not been left behind? Only time will tell.<sup>18</sup>

What is clear is that a bipartisan focus on education “reform” has taken root over the past thirty years, within both political parties and across four consecutive presidential administrations, and has altered the *entire* education policy landscape, including higher education. Once impervious to outside interference, the higher education sector has experienced diminished autonomy in recent years as policymakers, families, and students have raised questions about its operation. First, some background. The system is big and still growing. Now enrolling twenty million students from the United States and around the world, the roughly 4,700 degree-granting institutions that comprise it can be best understood as a critical government appendage that parlays

Once impervious to outside interference, the higher education sector has experienced diminished autonomy in recent years as policymakers, families, and students have raised questions about its operation.

---

state and federal subsidies and tax expenditures into expert credentials and cutting-edge research to accommodate the nation’s changing labor market and economic development needs.

That said, the system has many infirmities, as has been amply documented by researchers and the media over the last several years. Rising costs, declining public investment, slapdash accountability measures, and widely divergent rates of matriculation and graduation, depending on student demographics and institutional profiles, can be counted among its most pressing challenges. Indeed, the story of American higher education must account for the sector’s strengths and weaknesses as well as its development from a small, poorly funded collection of private denominational colleges in the nineteenth century to a resource-intensive system of public/private institutions in the twentieth century. Its decentralized structure and diverse assortment of missions and types — including for-profit and nonprofit vocational schools and institutes, community colleges, tribal colleges, liberal arts colleges, and research universities — has made the higher education sector resistant to regulation.

This is changing. The K-12 accountability policy paradigm, and the deep sense of skepticism at its core, has in recent years worked its way up the education ladder and penetrated the higher education sector. Currently, the sector is experiencing diminished autonomy akin to the loss of professional control in K-12 schooling that began in the 1980s. According to political scientist Jeffrey Henig, a contributor to this volume, it was at that time when governors and legislatures, in response to the perceived educational crisis brought to the fore by the release of *A Nation At Risk*, responded with new centralized mandates, programs, and assessments. Henig chronicles the turn away from a narrow range of “single-purpose” education policymaking bodies (such as school boards and state education commissions) toward a volatile and competitive mix of “general purpose” policymaking institutions — from think tanks and advocacy groups to teachers unions and elected officials among countless others — a phenomenon he calls the “end of exceptionalism in education.”<sup>19</sup>

An end to exceptionalism has also come home to the higher education sector after years of relative equanimity. Although the federal role in K-12 receives more attention, government at all levels, including the federal level, has been engaged in coordinating and funding higher education since the middle of the nineteenth century — a century before it got interested in K-12. In the throes of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Land-Grant Act in 1862, which propelled the government into the higher education business. Support for public land-grant colleges and agricultural research led to additional federal commitments for extension and vocational education. But the big turning point was World War II when the federal government doubled down on higher education and the citizens and scholars that it produced, pumping unimagined sums of money (\$4.5–\$5 billion) into defense

The K-12 accountability policy paradigm, and the deep sense of skepticism at its core, has in recent years worked its way up the education ladder and penetrated the higher education sector.

---



research and tuition subsidies for returning veterans under the GI Bill of 1944. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 thrust the government into the student loan business years before the HEA bundled that program together with new work study and grant instruments that helped reinvent the way students and their families paid for a college education.<sup>20</sup> By the mid-1970s, a “golden age” of college access had arrived; the HEA’s portable Basic Educational Opportunity Grants (renamed the Pell Grant in 1980) actually covered half the cost of a college education, as it was intended to do, and African Americans and other minority groups reaped the benefits of the legislation’s commitment to equal opportunity. The golden age, however, did not last long. By the 1980s, loans eclipsed grants as the government’s preferred aid instrument, supplemented later by tax credits, tax-deferred 529 college savings plans, and state and institutional merit aid programs that disproportionately benefited middle- and upper-income families.<sup>21</sup>

The past decade has witnessed the spread of various K-12-inspired plans to tie aid to costs, value, and quality — that is, to hold American higher education accountable for its performance. Once again, it was a federal study compounded by political and economic developments that crystalized the deficiencies in the sector. Like *A Nation At Risk* before it, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006), better known as the Spellings Report after then-U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, sent out a clarion call for NCLB-like higher education reform focused on student learning and employment outcomes, lowered costs, streamlined financial aid, and better institutional data.<sup>22</sup>

Overlooked by many people before the recession, the Spellings Report seemed prophetic after it. Starting in 2008, state-level funding for colleges and universities plummeted, tuition climbed, and government leaders at all levels starting taking a harder look at higher education. Republican Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin emerged as the poster child for the resurgence of gubernatorial power over higher education — pushing the legislature to remove tenure language from Wisconsin state statutes, freezing tuition, and cutting higher education funding. To be sure, policymakers were galvanized by concerned students and their families. Reports of spiraling dropout rates (nationally, half of all students do not graduate in four years)

and ballooning student debt (now averaging \$29,000 per borrower and exceeding, in aggregate, \$1 trillion) combined with reports of “limited learning” in college and high unemployment after have widened the calls for the reform of the higher education sector.<sup>23</sup> Those calls have grown thanks to the upsurge in student protests over simmering racial and gender tensions on campus in the fall of 2015. High-profile resignations of campus leaders at Missouri, Yale, and Claremont McKenna, along with dozens and dozens of campus demonstrations, have contributed to the felt sense that, in the words of one political pundit, “higher education is increasingly a house divided.”<sup>24</sup>

During his two terms in office, President Obama did not hide his desire to overhaul higher education. Obama put the sector “on notice” one year before asking Congress to amend the HEA legislation “so that affordability and value are included in determining which colleges receive certain types of federal aid” the next.<sup>25</sup> While Congress continued to debate the reauthorization of the HEA, the president pushed the U.S. Department of Education to create a federal rating system similar to the report cards already required of elementary and secondary schools.<sup>26</sup> And in 2015 he announced a plan for “free community college” for high school graduates, an idea that continues to gain traction at the state level and provides yet more evidence of the convergence of K-12 and higher education.

## Key Terms and Boundaries

Beyond examining the two sectors together in order to discern shared patterns of development, what do we mean by “convergence”? The idea of “convergence theory” has been used by scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds to study “the tendency of policies to grow more alike, in the form of increasing similarity in structures, processes, and performance.”<sup>27</sup> Much of this work has focused on international relations and global economic development, though educational researchers have also used it to explore the migration, transfer, diffusion, and isomorphism of policies and programs — such as performance funding, merit aid programs, or prepaid tuition plans — between and among different states.<sup>28</sup> In a departure from the extant literature, which is sector specific (focusing on either K-12 or higher education, but rarely both) the essays in this book flow through the entire K-16 system. Building on the pioneering research of Hugh Davis Graham and Michael Kirst, we have conceived of convergence as an analytic framework to explore changes in a representative, though by no means exhaustive, number of policy domain areas across the entire K-16 education network.<sup>29</sup> What new insights emerge when looking at the total system? Why have accountability and outcomes become the new watchwords in American education? How has K-12 shaped higher education? How has higher education shaped K-12? In what ways have the federal and state roles in

We engage the idea of convergence as both a process to be understood and as a set of concrete policies that have created linkages between the state and federal governments and the K-16 system and between and among the various institutions that together comprise that system.

---



education changed? These are the types of questions that this book asks and seeks to answer.

Specifically, we engage the idea of convergence as both a *process* to be understood and as a set of concrete *policies* that have created linkages between the state and federal governments and the K-16 system and between and among the various institutions that together comprise that system. The benefits of this approach are that it addresses the real ways in which K-12 and higher education have converged and the challenges this convergence presents; how federal, state, and institutional policy towards the two has converged and, in some cases, diverged, and the implications of this for future policy; the continuing gap between those who study one area and those who study the other, and the blind spots and problems this creates; the promise and pitfalls of emerging technologies to close the digital divide between K-12 and higher education; and, finally, an international perspective, as other nations have treated K-12 and higher education in tandem for some time.

A potential criticism of using convergence as an analytic frame is that in the effort to locate points of intersection we may flatten out what is in reality a much more contested story. To avoid such gross instrumentalism and teleology requires carefully distinguishing between idealized policy *creation* on the one hand and the messiness of policy *implementation* on the other, and to recognize the gap between them. After all, even a cursory look back at the history of American education reveals countless efforts on the part of policymakers to streamline and create a seamless K-16 system only to be disappointed by the results, then stirred to pursue yet new interventions in the hope of greater coherence. The initial efforts in this regard occurred at the turn of the twentieth century, in the midst of what some scholars have called an “organizational revolution,” during the period of rapid immigration, industrialization, and urbanization of the United States.<sup>30</sup> This was when the first glimpse of America’s



mass education system began to come into view and when the earliest efforts at convergence began. These were voluntary strategies energized by a budding network of national associations, professional communities, and innovative education leaders who sought to strengthen the K-12/higher education relationship in the absence of powerful federal interventions.<sup>31</sup>

At the time, higher education leaders often initiated cross-sector partnerships by reaching down the education ladder to shape the emerging K-12 system.<sup>32</sup> Why? The answer was prosaic: College and university leaders understood that the future of their institutions fundamentally depended on the K-12 sector's capacity to produce college-ready graduates interested and able to pursue further education. The regional accrediting system that we have today was created with this goal in mind. College educators — usually education school faculty — took it on themselves to inspect nearby high schools to determine which ones produced the best graduates.<sup>33</sup> Accreditors surveyed the quality and credentials of local high school faculty and the curriculum they offered — using the opportunity to advance their professional agenda by giving higher marks to schools that employed ed-school graduates. The rise of accreditation begat a new interest in systematizing high school curricula, and in 1892 the National Education Association convened the Committee of Ten, appointing President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University as the chair, to do just that. After several years and scads of meetings around the country, the committee issued its famous report, which did not solve the problem of “articulation” but, rather, brought much-needed attention to the idea of curricular “uniformity in the secondary schools.”<sup>34</sup> Colleges also began experimenting with new admission tests and remedial education and adjustment programs to assist in the selection and retention of college students.<sup>35</sup> Given the amount of institution building and experimentation then afoot, it should come as little surprise that in 1901 the first junior college sprouted up in Joliet, Illinois, as a new intermediary to connect K-12 and higher education. It was the brainchild of President

William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago, who thought the higher education sector would benefit from a two-year variant aimed at providing vocational and, for a small subset of ambitious but underserved students, college preparatory training.<sup>36</sup>

Admittedly, these voluntary, local interventions, though ultimately important for the nation's educational development, provided a rocky foundation upon which to build "one best system."<sup>37</sup> In fact, until the federal government inserted itself into the nation's education system during the Great Depression and World War II, the K-12 and higher education systems remained far apart on most issues and also internally divided along class, race, gender, and regional lines. Nevertheless, we have highlighted these initial convergence-building efforts for three reasons. First, to underscore the deep-seated desire for convergence among educators across the K-16 system, as well as to display some of the ways in which those educators tried to achieve it. Second, to provide historical context for the subsequent federal interventions that are discussed in the chapters that follow and that led to and grew out of the historic ESEA and HEA of 1965 — the federal government's first attempt at synthesizing and integrating the K-12 and higher education sectors by creating and funding new pathways of opportunity to give all students, regardless of station, an equal educational opportunity.<sup>38</sup> And, finally, to remind readers that the convergence process that we explore in this book remains a product of American history and of America's unique brand of educational federalism that demands voluntary *and* government action at the local, state, and national levels. As we shall see, the convergence process has been shaped by the creative combination of actors and institutions — of myriad policies and programs working in and out of sync — in both K-12 and higher education and across the entire polity.<sup>39</sup>

Our capacious understanding of the convergence process begs yet another, related question: What are the boundaries of the K-16 sector that we explore? To be sure, to speak of "the education sector," or the "education system," or "education policy" probably obscures more than it reveals; none of these terms come close to capturing the diversity of institutional types that make up organized learning in the United States. So, are we speaking of public institutions, private institutions, for-profit institutions, or some combination thereof? Building on recent cutting-edge scholarship from across the social sciences, we focus on the latter formulation — namely, the education sector as a politically and socially bounded space, governed by federal, state, and local policies and regulations, consisting of a plural arrangement of public/private institutions. In a departure from most scholarship that has tended to draw a hard line between public and private schools and colleges, we have blended these in order to better capture the actual organization and operation of our nation's schools and colleges. Neither the organization nor the politics of America's educational policymaking system can be understood in the absence of explaining how so-called private institutions are shaped by public policy and the rule of law and how so-called public institutions likewise seek private advantage that places them squarely outside the ambit of a pure social good.<sup>40</sup>

We believe there is much to recommend that education research embrace a public/private approach.<sup>41</sup> At the K-12 level, the steady growth of independent schools, voucher programs, home schooling, and charter schools, to cite the most obvious developments, reveals a range of institutional forms that cuts against the narrow ways in which we have tended to think about the composition of the nation's education



system. Long gone is the time when common schools and Catholic schools were the only real options available — and the only types of schools scholars studied. Although 90 percent of American students attend a zoned public school, the recent proliferation of alternative educational models, like charter schools, which are publicly authorized and funded but are run by private charter companies, community organizations, and nonprofits, suggests that the simplistic educational landscape of old will not suffice in an era of “no excuses.”

The voluntary and private sectors have long engaged public schools to deliver education and other services to surrounding communities.<sup>42</sup> We tend to overlook the extent to which traditional public schools depend on private and voluntary action to operate. A few examples will suffice. Public schools routinely partner with private providers to offer before- and after-school care, food, and janitorial services. Parent-teacher organizations play an increasingly important role in fund raising and in mobilizing volunteer teaching assistants and tutors to help overburdened teachers and their struggling students. Private schools, meanwhile, have long received federal aid for library resources and school lunch programs as well as limited access to special education services and Title I programming for qualified students. And, of course, private schools are tax exempt nonprofits, yet another way in which the government’s regulatory apparatus has benefited the private sector.<sup>43</sup>

The blended public/private approach is likewise applicable to higher education. Take, for example, the public two- and four-year institutions that educate upwards of 80 percent of all students. In the wake of declining state funding, now hovering below 10 percent nationally and showing few signs of increasing, leaders at public flagships such as the University of Virginia and the University of Michigan have begun describing their schools as publicly chartered private institutions, even adopting the term “privatization” to describe this process.<sup>44</sup> In reality, the process is far more complicated in practice. For even as public institutions rely more on private funding and support than ever before — whether from tuition revenue, private gifts, knowledge

transfer, industry/academic partnerships, or foundations — they still receive billions in federal, which is to say public, funding for student aid and research.<sup>45</sup>

The case for a hybrid public/private higher education model can be seen even more clearly by looking at private universities and colleges. Consider, for instance, that “private” Vanderbilt University receives roughly \$600 million in annual research support — nearly every penny from public sources, and the vast majority from the federal government; or that 21 percent of the students at “private” Drew University — a selective liberal arts college — receive Pell Grants; or that both schools are designated as tax-exempt nonprofits by the IRS. Even “for-profits” like the University of Phoenix and DeVry University, where by law up to 90 percent of their revenues may derive from federal student aid, benefit from considerable public support. All of which is to say that while the combination of funds differs at different institutions, the bottom line does not change: the American higher education system, like its K-12 counterpart, can most fruitfully be understood as a public/private sector. Indeed, the recognition of the public/private nature of America’s total K-16 system is yet another example of convergence that this book explores.

## Forces Driving Convergence

The distinct origins and historical evolution of the K-12 and higher education sectors in the United States put them on very different trajectories and served to reinforce the idea that scholars, policymakers, and educational administrators should treat the two sectors separately. The long-standing separation of the two sectors, meanwhile, over time served to reinforce their distinctiveness. This was buttressed by having separate federal (and often state) policies and governing bodies to manage K-12 and higher education. The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act, though both sharing the goal of expanding educational opportunity and signed into law in 1965, created distinct policies and financing streams. However, as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the ESEA and HEA at the beginning of the twenty-first century, changes in those laws have combined with programmatic innovation and a variety of societal forces to push the two sectors towards convergence. The moment is thus propitious for a reconsideration of the progress that has — and has not — been made since the enactment of ESEA and HEA and the ways in which convergence has the potential to transform K-12 and higher education and better align them.

It is crucial to recognize that there is not a single actor, institution, or dynamic driving the convergence of the K-12 and higher education sectors, but rather a multitude of forces pushing in (more or less) the same direction. While government policy (and especially federal policy) has played a central role in pushing convergence over the past twenty years, this is by no means the only reason why the walls between the two education sectors appear to be coming down. This is an important point to note because if one force driving convergence loses steam or gives up the push entirely, there are other forces in place to keep the momentum going. The forces driving convergence include:



## **The Push for Assessment and Accountability**

The “accountability paradigm,” which emerged in the K-12 sector in the 1990s and became thoroughly institutionalized after No Child Left Behind’s passage in 2002, has now suffused the discourse around higher education reform as well.<sup>46</sup> While the latest reauthorization of ESEA reduces federal accountability mandates for K-12 schools in significant ways, the testing and transparency regime at the heart of NCLB remains in place and states have embedded the idea of accountability deeply into their own laws and policies.<sup>47</sup> The reauthorization of HEA remains a work in progress, but the Obama administration pushed hard on expanding assessment and accountability for colleges and universities, and this push has been picked up by state policymakers and national accreditation agencies.<sup>48</sup> While the precise dimensions of assessment and accountability might change in the coming years, neither is going away. In the era of “college and career readiness,” K-12 schools are now being held accountable for preparing students to succeed in college and colleges are increasingly being held accountable for student learning, graduation rates, and career outcomes.<sup>49</sup> This accountability has led K-12 schools and colleges to engage with each other as never before in American history.

## **Increased Demand for Postsecondary Education**

When ESEA and HEA were enacted in the 1960s, the demand for higher education was far lower than it is today and it primarily served the elite in society. Citizens’ and policymakers’ expectations around postsecondary schooling have been profoundly reshaped, leading to a “college for all” movement that has transformed the scope of the higher education marketplace and the focus of K-12 schooling.<sup>50</sup> Since a high school diploma is now no longer enough to be successful in the labor market, it makes sense that convergence would need to occur to meet society’s elevated expectations about the basic level of education a person should require.

## **Increasingly Intertwined Institutional Objectives**

There is growing pressure (from multiple sources) on K-12 schools to ensure that students graduate from high school “college and career ready” and growing pressure on colleges and universities to ensure that admitted students graduate and find gainful employment.<sup>51</sup> These pressures have led to the development of the Common Core

State Standards Initiative and enhanced cooperation and partnerships across the traditional sectoral divide.

## **Global Economic Competition and Transfer of Educational Models**

Globalization has, it is often noted, made the world a smaller and more interconnected place.<sup>52</sup> Since the 1980s, international trade and global economic competition have increasingly dominated the American political discourse and animated our foreign and domestic policymaking. This is particularly true in education, where the *A Nation at Risk* report emphasized the connection between the quality of American education, the productivity of our workforce, and the strength of our economy. Policymakers have identified (fairly or unfairly) our education system as the primary source of our economic maladies — and as their potential cure if reformed properly. Reconciling the historical disconnect between K-12 schooling and colleges and universities is seen as central to this reform effort and the country often looks abroad (to places like Finland, South Korea, and Singapore with more unified K-16 systems) for models to inspire closer linkages across the two sectors here.<sup>53</sup>

## **States' K-16 Governance Initiatives**

Many individual states, at their own initiative, have created new governance structures to unite their disconnected K-12 and higher education sectors.<sup>54</sup> In Kentucky, Rhode Island, and Arizona, this has taken the form of P-16 or P-20 advisory councils that make policy recommendations to separate state departments of elementary and secondary education and higher education. Florida has gone even further by creating a single unified education agency to create policy for both sectors.<sup>55</sup>

## **Growing Portfolio of Educational Providers**

While the higher education sector has always had a diverse array of public/private and profit and nonprofit education providers, the past twenty years has seen significant growth in charter schools, voucher programs, and for-profit education operators (such as Edison) in elementary and secondary education.<sup>56</sup> As a result, an emphasis on diverse provision and consumer choice, long a staple of the higher education sector, has now penetrated the K-12 sector.

## **Technological**

Dramatic technological advances in recent years — in particular expanded access to high speed internet; the spread of computers to schools, teachers, and students; and the rise of social media — have forged new digital and human linkages between K-12 and higher education. This has facilitated widespread information sharing and mutual adaptation across the K-12 and higher education sectors and permitted K-12 students to take college courses online.<sup>57</sup>

## **Demographic**

A recent surge in immigration and the rapid diversification of the American population has changed the characteristics of the college-bound population and pushed high

schools and colleges to partner to ensure that these “nontraditional” and evermore diverse student populations are better prepared for postsecondary education.<sup>58</sup>

### **National Professional Associations**

The large national professional associations that represent the teachers and administrators who work in K-12 and higher education have become increasingly influential in American politics and policymaking.<sup>59</sup> The associations that have traditionally represented K-12 teachers, led by the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, and college professors, led by the American Association of University Professors, have joined forces with principals, superintendents, and disciplinary bodies (math teachers, English teachers, etc.) to create “professional learning communities” in which best practices around pedagogy and curriculum are shared throughout the K-16 pipeline.

### **National Governmental Organizations**

Like educational professionals, the various governmental actors have their own organizations that provide a convening, information-sharing, and consensus-building function. These include the National Governors Association (NGA), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), National Conference of State Legislators, and the National Association of State Boards of Education, among others. The NGA and CCSSO, for example, led the effort to draft the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which has encouraged K-12 schools to focus on college readiness.

### **National and State Education Reform Advocacy Groups and Foundations**

Recent years — and in particular the past decade — we have seen a tremendous growth in the number, activity, and influence of “education reform advocacy groups” (ERAOs) and a burgeoning network of foundations that support ERAOs in addition to their own institutional reform agendas. At the national level, these groups include StudentsFirst, the Foundation for Excellence in Education, the Education Trust, Stand for Children, Democrats for Education Reform, EF Education First, and 50CAN. Similar ERAOs have emerged at the state level such as SCORE (TN), the Rodell Foundation (DE), Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (KY), and Advance Illinois.<sup>60</sup>

### **Accreditation Bodies**

The national and regional accrediting bodies (such as the Middle States, New England, Southern, Western, North Central associations) undertake regular evaluation visits to K-12 and higher education institutions. The application of standardized norms related to governance, finance, assessment, and accountability within and (increasingly) across the K-12 and higher education sectors is an important nongovernmental source of convergence.<sup>61</sup> (Though it is important to note that government action — and threat of action — often influences the direction that accreditation agencies take.)



## Key Insights from the Volume

We engage the idea of convergence as both a *process* to be understood and as a set of concrete *policies* that have created linkages between the federal government and the K-16 system and between and among the various institutions that together comprise that system. In our volume, Jeff Henig and Kevin Dougherty explore the shifting terrain of educational governance in the United States from a historically decentralized and locally controlled system to one in which state and federal governments play an increasingly important role and educational policies have become more standardized. At the same time that decision making has become more centralized (though still comparatively much less centralized than most other countries), more authority has been asserted by politicians in general purpose governing institutions — executives, legislatures, city councils — who historically had left policymaking in the hands of special purpose education bodies (such as school boards) or in the hands of school leaders themselves.

Adam Nelson and Nick Strohl demonstrate how shifting patterns of education finance have been both a cause and a consequence of greater centralization of education governance around funding instruments that privileged individual rather than collective interests. As federal and state governments assumed a greater share of education funding in the wake of ESEA and HEA, there was a simultaneous call for schools and universities to embrace the preferred goals and methods of higher levels of government. More centralized governance and finance — what Jal Mehta has elsewhere called “rational administration from above” — provoked calls for greater coherence across the K-16 system.<sup>62</sup>

Arnold Shober traces the evolution of student assessment in American education and highlights the long-standing tension between practitioners’ desire for trust and discretion and the attempts of elected officials to hold teachers and schools accountable for generating better achievement outcomes. He highlights the important role of interest group politics in shaping both K-12 and higher education policy and notes that colleges and universities have been more successful than elementary and secondary schools at resisting outside interference. At the heart of this struggle, he argues, are divergent ideological visions for what the purposes of schooling should be, with practitioners focused on teaching as a craft and the individual benefits of education

for students, and politicians emphasizing the need for education that benefits the broader community, state, and/or nation. Shober also emphasizes the significance of the Common Core — and its focus on college and career readiness — in driving convergence even as he notes the backlash that the push for standards and standardization has generated.

Dan Goldhaber and Nate Brown connect efforts to use accountability to improve student performance to the more recent push to use accountability to improve the quality of teachers and teaching in American education at all levels. They highlight a very direct connection between K-12 schools and higher education — the teacher preparation programs at colleges of education that train the vast majority of educators in American classrooms. The recent focus on improving K-12 student performance has led to a renewed effort at improving teacher quality, which in turn has led policymakers to revamp university teacher preparation programs and to consider tying teacher job placement and performance with governmental funding. As a site where large numbers of university students and faculty intersect with K-12 schools, teacher preparation programs serve as a particularly revealing space to explore convergence.

Surveying higher education, Luciana Dar sees greater (and more successful) resistance to the accountability paradigm than in the K-12 sector. The historical legacy of independence and autonomy — buttressed by the public perception of stronger performance in colleges and universities — has meant that assessment and accountability to date have taken a different and weaker form there than in elementary and secondary schools. While government-mandated accountability is now the norm in K-12 education, in higher education accountability today is looser, more voluntary and driven more by nongovernmental actors (i.e., accreditors and college rankings) than public policy. Nonetheless, the *idea* of performance-based accountability appears to be taking hold in higher education, driven by a combination of political and market pressures.

James Rosenbaum and his colleagues explicate the crucial role that community colleges play in linking elementary and secondary schools with colleges and universities. With more and more high school graduates aspiring to a college degree, postsecondary education is no longer for the elite few but for the masses. At the same time, however, the data are abundantly clear that American K-12 schools are not adequately preparing students to be college and career ready. Public policy has responded in two complementary ways: with a push for student, teacher, and institutional accountability (described above) and with an expanded role for community colleges for those high school graduates who are either unprepared for a four-year college or cannot afford it. Community colleges have become a crucial bridge between K-12

With more and more high school graduates aspiring to a college degree, postsecondary education is no longer for the elite few but for the masses. At the same time, however, the data are abundantly clear that American K-12 schools are not adequately preparing students to be college and career ready.

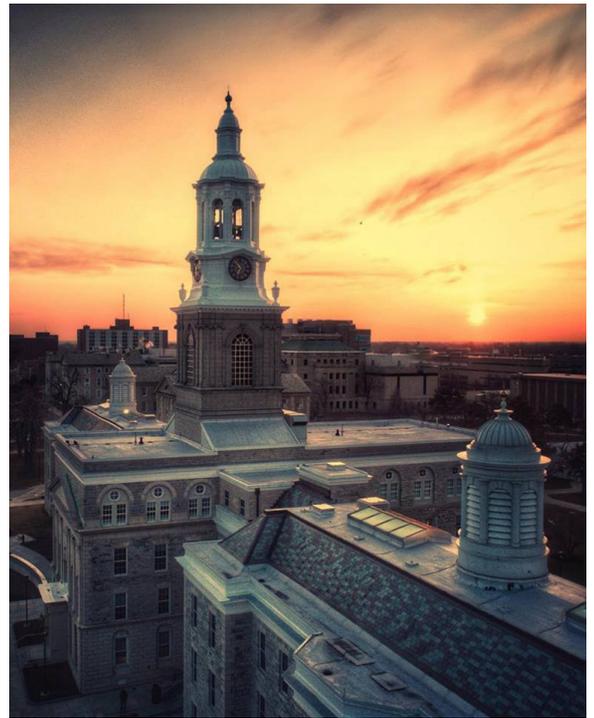
---

and higher education — and a key driver of convergence — as they have developed strong connections up and down the educational chain. High school students now regularly take community college courses (often taught by community college professors in their high school buildings), while four-year colleges and universities have dramatically expanded the use of articulation agreements with their two-year counterparts. These relationships have forced stakeholders in K-12 schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities to examine the alignment of curricula and pedagogical practices.

Donnell Butler examines the way in which public policy and K-12 and higher education have and have not addressed the challenge of educational access and opportunity in America since the passage of ESEA and HEA. He also explores the important role that elite liberal arts colleges, including his home institution of Franklin and Marshall (F&M) — whose mission and high tuition has long made them bastions of white privilege — are playing in connecting K-12 and higher education. Butler has played a leading role in F&M's effort to identify, mentor, recruit, and support underrepresented minorities and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, creating a model that has gained national attention. With the US seeing a growing number of “nontraditional” college-going students, colleges and universities by necessity are reaching out in unprecedented ways to recruit and prepare students for higher education — both to redress some of the “failings” of K-12 schools (particularly in high-poverty areas) and to expand the number and diversity of the students who attend their own institutions.

Josipa Roksa reveals the inadequacies of using the high school diploma as a proxy for college readiness. She shows that “limited learning” is a problem in both K-12 and higher education and that remediation is often required to prepare new students for the challenges of a college education. The high levels of remediation that most colleges and universities (and particularly community colleges) are required to do, coupled with low persistence and completion rates, have created fertile ground for greater communication and coordination between the sectors. This has led to a crucial shift in focus from credits and credentials to knowledge and skills in order to facilitate the transition from high school to college. This normative shift in defining academic preparation offers a promising beginning, despite the challenges involved in implementing the common vision of the Common Core. In addition, she notes that the new (if nascent) focus on outcomes and accountability in higher education has the potential to push colleges to focus on learning and completion rather than merely enrollments. While efforts such as the Measuring College Learning (MCL) and Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) initiatives are promising, she concurs with Dar that these efforts have encountered significant resistance and have a long way to go.

June Ahn analyzes the impact that technology has had in driving convergence in the past and its potential to do so in the future. He argues that while public policies around technology have expanded its use in schools and colleges, that is only part





of the story and we need to think about the adoption and impact of technology in education as a “sociomaterial” practice in which “a confluence of social and technical factors combines in human action, to result in the adoption and consequences of new technology in organizations.” Only then, he argues, can we understand how technology may impact teaching and the movement towards convergence around a single K-16 system.

Cynthia Miller-Idriss expands the analytical lens of the volume from the national to the international and highlights the myriad ways in which globalization has served as a significant source of political, policy, and programmatic convergence in education. She shows how the growing emphasis during the second half of the twentieth century on education as a key resource for national security, economic development, and international competitiveness shaped national policy and pushed for convergence across the K-12 and higher education sectors. The interconnectedness of the contemporary world — facilitated by immigration, travel, and the expansion of technology described by Ahn — has made “diversity” and education for global awareness and citizenship a hallmark of both K-12 and higher education in the US. The pervasive benchmarking of international educational performance has led America (like other nations) to turn its gaze outward to learn about (and often adopt) the practices of other countries. In this sense then, convergence may ultimately prove to be an international as well as a national phenomenon.

## The Future of Convergence

Convergence is manifesting itself in three primary ways: as a normative convergence around what the goals of K-12 and higher education should be and the need to create a more unified K-16 system; a policy convergence about how government can best mandate and/or incentivize schools and colleges to achieve these goals; and a programmatic convergence around what educational institutions will need to do to comply with these directives and deliver on these goals. At the same time, it is

important to note that convergence has proceeded — and will continue to proceed — unevenly across different parts of the K-16 system. There is great diversity among American educational providers and it is important to differentiate among the different types of institutions as the policy environment and political context can vary widely. In addition to different substantive areas of convergence (e.g., standards, assessment, accountability, etc.), there are different levels of convergence (federal, state, local, institutional) and different actors (both governmental and nongovernmental) influencing it. As a result, even as convergence appears to be well underway, it is clearly far from complete or by any means inevitable and will not be a linear process — it will likely proceed in fits and starts and be more pronounced in some domains of K-16 education than others.

While convergence may be occurring on the ground, is it actually a good thing? Proponents of K-16 convergence articulate several different goals: greater racial and socioeconomic equity, enhanced systemic efficiency, and improved global competitiveness, to name but a few. But convergence may deliver on these myriad goals unevenly. In the final analysis, if convergence leads to better or more equitable educational outcomes in the United States, then it would seem to be a force for positive change. There is, however, no guarantee that it will do so and convergence may ultimately make little difference or even make things worse if, for example, the focus on assessment and accountability leads to a narrowing of the curriculum or to greater “teaching to the test.” Furthermore, the *ideal* of convergence may very well differ significantly from the *reality* of convergence. After all, as we have seen, even a well-intentioned and well-designed theory of educational change can go awry if implemented poorly.

Nonetheless, it is increasingly clear that having separate ideas, policies, and programs in the two sectors that do not engage or align with each other will only perpetuate the great divide and undermine the effectiveness of our educational system. Now more than ever, K-12 and higher education need to converge on a shared mission and partner to advance the individual interests of American students and the collective interests of the nation. We recommend a number of steps that could be taken to facilitate this process:

1. **Combine ESEA and HEA:** The creation of separate policies, funding streams, and governance structures for K-12 and higher education has long perpetuated the separation of the two sectors — not only failing to encourage them to reach across the divide, but in many ways providing incentives for them to preserve it. Federal policymakers should strongly consider combining the ESEA and HEA into a single piece of legislation and use it to align the goals of institutions operating across the K-16 sector.
2. **Merge State K-12 and Higher Ed Policies and Agencies:** State education policy, like federal policy, should be used to unite rather than divide the two sectors. States should consider merging their often separate agencies for K-12 and higher education regulation. Florida, for example, created a unitary department that (among other things) houses a state data “warehouse” combining K-12 and higher student unit record data.<sup>63</sup> And the New York State

Board of Regents has long overseen both precollegiate and higher education. Where such unitary management and oversight is not feasible, states should create a K-16 task force to encourage joint deliberation and policymaking across the two sectors.<sup>64</sup>

3. **Encourage K-16 Bridge Building:** As the chapters by Butler and Rosenbaum et al. document, many K-12 and higher education institutions have embraced the idea of convergence on their own and have been entrepreneurial and innovative in creating partnerships that bridge the two sectors. These efforts should be lauded, emulated, and expanded. Nonprofits (such as the Aspen Institute, Achieve, StriveTogether, Ready by 21, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy); foundations (such as Bill & Melinda Gates, Lumina, and Teagle); and membership organizations (such as the American Educational Research Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Association of American Colleges & Universities, the National Education Association, and the American Association of University Professors) should encourage the development of these partnerships, fund them if possible through grants, and support research and communication that will disseminate best practices to practitioners operating across the K-16 spectrum.
4. **Incorporate K-12 and Higher Ed Engagement in Accreditation Reviews:** Making K-12 and higher education partnerships a priority in the accreditation process for schools and universities will ensure that it becomes an institutional priority — backed by accountability — for schools and colleges. They should be encouraged — and incentivized — to continue to develop and expand partnerships that connect K-12 students and teachers to higher education and connect college students and professors to elementary and secondary schools.
5. **Reconceptualize Educational Scholarship:** One of the primary goals of this volume is to initiate a long-overdue reevaluation of the divide between scholarship on K-12 and higher education. This divide is reflected in the way that individual scholars almost universally operate in one sector or the other; the way Colleges of Education define and recruit faculty lines as professors of elementary and secondary education OR professors of higher education; in the ways that many think tanks have separate experts and often even separate divisions for the study of K-12 and higher education; and the way funders and professional associations structure their grant making and conferences. To be fair, approaching the field of education as two distinct sectors merely reflects the reality of the way in which scholars are operating in the field, but doing so nonetheless serves to perpetuate the divide and needs to be reconsidered.

Though separate pieces of legislation, the ESEA and HEA of 1965 shared a common purpose — to expand educational opportunity and achievement for American students. While both the laws and the country have changed significantly over the past fifty years, this equity goal remains at their core, at once only partially fulfilled but even more important in the twenty-first century. The educational aspirations of citizens and policymakers alike have grown dramatically, with increased expectations for how



much students should learn and how much schooling they should complete. However, while many more Americans are attending and completing high school in 2015 than in 1965, substantial racial and socioeconomic opportunity and achievement gaps persist. While many more American are attending and completing college, substantial racial and socioeconomic opportunity and achievement gaps persist in that sector as well. And, in both sectors, there are well-founded concerns about the quality of teaching and learning even in the face of rising costs. Despite the best intentions then, the equity and achievement problems ESEA and HEA were intended to address remain with us. Indeed, in an era where a high school — and increasingly a college — degree have become a necessity for economic success, improving K-12 and higher education must be a national imperative. The convergence of the two sectors that is now underway encourages scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to approach education as a single continuum to better deliver on the promise of improved education for all.

## Endnotes

- 1 The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is available at [https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/thelaw/civil\\_rights\\_act.html](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/history/35th/thelaw/civil_rights_act.html).
- 2 For a synoptic account of both the ESEA and the HEA, see Hugh Davis Graham, *The Uncertain Triumph: Federal Education Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Years* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). For the significance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on American education, see Gary Orfield, *The Reconstruction of Southern Education: The Schools and the 1964 Civil Rights Act* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969).
- 3 President Lyndon B. Johnson, "State of the Union Address," January 8, 1964, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26787>.
- 4 President Lyndon B. Johnson, "Great Society Speech," May 22, 1964, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/great-society-speech/>.
- 5 Federal K-12 funding is available at Allie Bidwell, "Report: Federal Education Funding Plummeted," *U.S. News & World Report*, June 24, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2015/06/24/report-federal-education-funding-cut-by-5-times-more-than-all-spending>. Fourteen billion dollars was allocated to Title I of ESEA in FY 2015, available at "Revised ESEA Title I LEA Allocations – FY 2015," U.S. Department of Education, accessed August 8, 2018, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy15/index.html>. Higher education funding is available at *Federal and State Funding of Higher Education: A changing landscape*, Pew Charitable Trusts, June 2015, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2015/06/federal-and-state-funding-of-higher-education>.
- 6 Gareth Davies, *See Government Grow: Education Politics from Johnson to Reagan* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007); John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).
- 7 On the new politics described here, see Patrick J. McGuinn, *No Child Left Behind and the Transformation of Federal Education Policy, 1965–2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006); and Christopher P. Loss, *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- 8 President Ronald Reagan, "First Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43130>.
- 9 Davies, *See Government Grow*.
- 10 David P. Gardner et al., *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1983): 5.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 The Obama administration's Department of Education ultimately granted waivers to allow forty-two states to bypass the proficiency mandate and thus have greater flexibility in student testing and measurement.
- 13 McGuinn, *No Child Left Behind*.
- 14 Figures in National Center for Education Statistics, "Fast Facts," accessed on August 8, 2018, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>.
- 15 Race to the Top information available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/education/k-12/race-to-the-top>. See also: Patrick McGuinn, "Stimulating Reform: Race to the Top, Competitive Grants and the Obama Education Agenda," *Educational Policy* 26, 1 (2012): 136–59.

- 16 *Fundamental Change: Innovation in America's Schools Under Race to the Top* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, November 2015): 56, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/rttfinalrpt1115.pdf>.
- 17 Lamar Alexander, "Every Student Succeeds Act Gives States, Teachers Responsibility," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, December 13, 2015, <https://www.questia.com/newspaper/1P2-39092867/every-student-succeeds-act-gives-states-teachers>.
- 18 On the ESSA, see "Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)," U.S. Department of Education, accessed August 8, 2018, <http://www.ed.gov/essa>. For a more sober view of the enactment of ESSA, see Alia Wong, "The Bloated Rhetoric of No Child Left Behind's Demise," *Atlantic*, December 9, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/12/the-bloated-rhetoric-of-no-child-left-behinds-demise/419688/>.
- 19 Jeffery R. Henig, *The End of Exceptionalism in American Education: The Changing Politics of School Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2013). See also Patrick J. McGuinn, "Fight Club: Are advocacy organizations changing the politics of education?," *Education Next* 12, 3 (2012), <http://educationnext.org/fight-club/>.
- 20 Loss, *Between Citizens and the State*.
- 21 Ibid; and Christopher P. Loss, "Keep the Doors Open," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 11, 2013, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/03/11/essay-worrisome-trends-public-policy-debates-student-aid>.
- 22 Margaret Spellings et al., *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, September 2006), <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/pre-pub-report.pdf>.
- 23 Debt data available at "Project on Student Debt," Institute for College Access & Success, accessed August 8, 2018, <http://ticas.org/posd/home>; Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- 24 George F. Will, "American higher education is a house divided," *Washington Post*, December 18, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/higher-education-is-a-house-divided/2015/12/18/1a54f548-a4f4-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/higher-education-is-a-house-divided/2015/12/18/1a54f548-a4f4-11e5-9c4e-be37f66848bb_story.html).
- 25 President Barack Obama, "State of the Union Address," February 12, 2013, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address>.
- 26 For more information on the "College Scorecard" see: U.S. Department of Education, "Education Department Releases College Scorecard to Help Students Choose Best College for Them," press release, February 13, 2013, <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education-department-releases-college-scorecard-help-students-choose-best-college-them>.
- 27 For a good overview, see Colin J. Bennett, "Review Article: What Is Policy Convergence and What Causes It?," *British Journal of Political Science* 21, 2 (1991): 215-33; and Daniel W. Drezner, "Globalization and Policy Convergence," *International Studies Review* 3, 1 (2001): 53-78, quote on 53. Kathrina Holzinger and Christoph Knill, "Causes and conditions of cross-national policy convergence," *Journal of European Public Policy* 12, 5 (2005): 775-96.
- 28 On the policy diffusion process generally, see Michael Mintrom, "Policy Entrepreneurs and the Diffusion of Innovation," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, 3 (1997): 738-70, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2111674.pdf>. On the diffusion of education policy specifically, see, for example, Michael Mintrom and Sandra Vergari, "Policy Networks and Innovation Diffusion: The Case of State Education Reforms," *Journal of Politics* 60, 1 (1998): 126-48; William R. Doyle, "The Adoption of Merit-Based Student Grant Programs: An Event History Analysis," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28, 3 (2006): 259-85; and Michael K. McLendon, James C. Hearn, and Russ Deaton, "Called to Account: Analyzing the Origins and Spread of State Performance-Accountability Policies for Higher Education," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28, 1 (2006): 1-24.

- 29 Michael W. Kirst and Andrea Venezia, eds., *From High School to College: Improving Opportunities for Success in Postsecondary Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004); Michael W. Kirst and Michael D. Usdan, "The Historical Context of the Divide Between K-12 and Higher Education," in *States, Schools, and Colleges: Policies to Improve Student Readiness for College and Strengthen Coordination Between Schools and Colleges* (San Jose: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, November 2009): 5-22, [http://highereducation.org/reports/ssc/ssc\\_Cha\\_1.pdf](http://highereducation.org/reports/ssc/ssc_Cha_1.pdf); Graham, *Uncertain Triumph*. Kirst was also the founder of The Bridge Project created to explore K-16 issues in education; see <http://web.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject/>.
- 30 Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Louis Galambos, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History," *Business History Review* 44, 3 (1970): 279-90; Brian Balogh, "Reorganizing the Organizational Synthesis: Federal-Professional Relations in Modern America," *Studies in American Political Development* 5, 1 (1991): 119-72.
- 31 On the turn of the twentieth century as a critical juncture for both K-12 and higher education, see David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); Tracy L. Steffes, *School, Society, & State: A New Education to Govern Modern America, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); and Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).
- 32 Hugh Hawkins, *Banding Together: The Rise of National Associations in American Higher Education, 1887-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
- 33 Marc A. VanOverbeke, *The Standardization of American Schooling: Linking Secondary and Higher Education, 1870-1910* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
- 34 Ibid, 125.
- 35 On the rise of testing, see Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999, 2000); and Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005).
- 36 On the creation of remedial education programs and the junior college, see Loss, *Between Citizens and the State*, especially 19-52.
- 37 Tyack, *One Best System*.
- 38 On the extent to which the ESEA and the HEA were intended to do this, see Graham, *Uncertain Triumph*, and Davies, *See Government Grow*.
- 39 On the workings of policy feedback, see Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1992); and Paul Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change," *World Politics* 45, 4 (1993): 595-628.
- 40 The literature on the blending of public/private is especially rich in the area of twentieth-century social policy and welfare studies. See, for example, Christopher Howard, *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Jacob S. Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Andrew J.F. Morris, *The Limits of Voluntarism: Charity and Welfare from the New Deal through the Great Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 41 On the benefits of this approach, see Brian Balogh, *The Associational State: American Governance in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 1-22.
- 42 Dana Goldstein, *The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession* (New York: Doubleday, 2014).

- 43 On the history of K-12 public/private partnerships, see Steffes, *School, Society, & State*; and for an excellent case study, see Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
- 44 There are lots of books on "privatization." For a good introduction, see Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); and Stanley Ikenberry and Christopher Mophew, *Privatizing the Public University: Perspectives from across the Academy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).
- 45 On the history of public/private higher education, see John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 70-3.
- 46 Michael Kirst and Mitchell Stevens, eds. *Remaking College: The Changing Ecology of Higher Education* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).
- 47 Richard F. Elmore, Charles H. Abelmann, and Susan H. Fuhrman, "The new accountability in state education reform: From process to performance," in *Holding Schools Accountable: Performance-Based Reform in Education* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996): 65-98.
- 48 Michael Stratford, "Obama Administration Pushes Transparency to Prod Accreditors," *Inside Higher Education* November 6, 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/11/06/obama-administration-pushes-transparency-prod-accreditors>. See also Arne Duncan, "Towards a New Focus on Outcomes in Higher Education," Remarks at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC), July 27, 2015, <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/toward-new-focus-outcomes-higher-education>.
- 49 Michael K. McLendon, James C. Hearn, and Russ Deaton, "Called to Account: Analyzing the Origins and Spread of State Performance-Accountability Policies for Higher Education," in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28, 1 (2006): 1-24; Nils C. Soguel and Pierre Jaccard, *Governance and Performance of Education Systems* (Netherlands: Springer, 2008); and F. King Alexander, "The Changing Face of Accountability: Monitoring and Assessing Institutional Performance in Higher Education," *Journal of Higher Education* 71, 4 (2000): 411-31.
- 50 Evan Schofer and John W. Meyer. "The Worldwide Expansion of Higher Education in the Twentieth Century," *American Sociological Review* 70, 6 (2005): 898-920.
- 51 Robert Rothman, "A Common Core of Readiness," *Educational Leadership* 69, 7 (2012): 10-5; Amanda Ripley, *The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).
- 52 Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco and Desirée Baolian Qin-Hilliard, eds. *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) and Joel Spring, *Globalization of Education: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
- 53 See, for example, Marc Tucker, *Surpassing Shanghai: An Agenda for American Education Built on the World's Leading Systems* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2011).
- 54 Andrea Venezia et al. *The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success*, (San Jose: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, September 2005), <http://www.immagic.com/eLibrary/ARCHIVES/GENERAL/NCPPE/N050901V.pdf>. See also: Jonathan Tafel and Nancy Eberhart, *Statewide School-College (K-16) Partnerships to Improve Student Performance* (Denver: State Higher Education Executive Officers, July 1999), <http://archive.sheeo.org/k16/transit/transit-sb-k16.pdf>.
- 55 Steffes, *States, Schools, & Colleges*.
- 56 Katrina E. Bulkley, Jeffrey R. Henig, and Henry M. Levin, eds. *Between Public and Private: Politics, Governance, and the New Portfolio Models for Urban School Reform* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2010).

- 57 Ben Wildavsky, Andrew Kelly, and Kevin Carey, eds. *Reinventing Higher Education: The Promise of Innovation* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2011) and Terry M. Moe and John E. Chubb, *Liberating Learning: Technology, Politics, and the Future of American Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).
- 58 Carola Suárez-Orozco, Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, and Irina Todorova, *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society* (New York: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).
- 59 Jal Mehta, "When Professions Shape Politics: The Case of Accountability in K-12 and Higher Education," *Educational Policy* 28: 6 (2014): 881-915.
- 60 Paul Manna and Susan Moffit, *New Education Advocacy Organizations in the U.S. States: National Snapshot and a Case Study of Advance Illinois* (New York: The Wallace Foundation, May 2014) <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/state-policy/pages/new-education-advocacy-organizations-in-the-u.s.-states-national-snapshot-and-a-case-study-of-advance-illinois.aspx>.
- 61 J. Fredericks Volkwein, "The assessment context: Accreditation, accountability, and performance," *New Directions for Institutional Research* S1 (September 2010): 3-12.
- 62 Jal Mehta, *The Allure of Order: High Hopes, Dashed Expectations, and the Troubled Quest to Remake American Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- 63 Alan Richard, "Florida Breaking Down the Walls Between K-12, Higher Ed," *Education Week*, February 13, 2002, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/02/13/22fla.h21.html>.
- 64 *States, Schools, & Colleges*.



## ABOUT THE ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE

Created in 1981, the Rockefeller Institute of Government is a public policy think tank providing cutting-edge, evidence-based policy. Our mission is to improve the capacities of communities, state and local governments, and the federal system to work toward genuine solutions to the nation's problems. Through rigorous, objective, and accessible analysis and outreach, the Institute gives citizens and governments facts and tools relevant to public decisions.

Learn more at [www.rockinst.org](http://www.rockinst.org).

LEARN MORE

[www.rockinst.org](http://www.rockinst.org)

@rockefellerinst

**Rockefeller**  
Institute of Government