Book Reviews

Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education

By David L. Kirp, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2003; ISBN 0-67401-146-5; 336 pages; \$29.95

The recent adoption of integrated marketing strategies by many major universities in America and abroad has focused attention on issues of “selling” higher education as if it were a product, of students as customers, and related aspects of commercialization. It was only a matter of time before a thoughtful critic would take on these matters, and David Kirp, a professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, has proven well suited to the task.

His book explores not only the marketing of higher education, but also the management of higher education institutions in a complex financial world with shrinking government funding, enticing entrepreneurial opportunities, and the challenges of attracting the best and brightest students. In fact, one section is called Management 101.

This is by no means a how-to volume for professionals seeking to learn how to develop integrated marketing campaigns. Instead it is a thorough exploration of how both public and private universities, as well as for-profit institutions, have sought increasing levels of income and

handled challenging money problems, in part through new structures and educational delivery mechanisms. At heart, however, the book is a professor’s look at these activities in the light of traditional academic values.

In recent years, universities have been purchasing substantial amounts of television and magazine advertising to establish their brand identities and support record-setting capital campaigns. Higher education institutions have launched major initiatives in distance and online education, seeing opportunities in the marketplace for new students and new revenues. Communication officers find themselves confronted with the increasing need to answer news media questions about money, whether about rising tuition, decreasing government support, the intricacies of campaign giving, or the importance of alumni giving percentages in national rankings.

Given those challenges, advancement professionals will find Kirp’s book a valuable and insightful tour of influential campuses and their activities in the marketplace. And tour is an apt description as Kirp has organized the

book with chapters about 14 public, private, and for-profit higher education institutions and their recent experiences in the competitive marketplace. This approach allows him to explore issues in depth, both from a theoretical standpoint and with detailed narratives of real world experiences. Anyone who has been in educational advancement for a decade or more will find that the book illuminates matters that they have encountered in their own institutions or in reading periodicals such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Those interested in marketing as the sophisticated communication with and recruitment of high ability students will be most interested in the book's first section, "The Higher Education Bazaar." Here Kirp explores competitive strategies employed by Dickinson College, the University of Chicago, New York University, and several other institutions. These range from institutional name changes to attracting star faculty members.

The story of Bill Durden coming back to his alma mater Dickinson College as president, committed to moving the institution forward through strategic planning and marketing communication, is perhaps the most useful part of the book for educational marketing professionals. Many elements of the admissions and marketing process, from development of a distinctive identity to strategic use of financial aid to attract high ability students, are explored in an engaging way.

The "Management 101" section of the book takes readers to the University of Southern California and the University of Michigan as well as to two professional schools, New York Law School and the Darden Graduate School of Business at the University of Virginia. Private fund raising, entrepreneurship, innovative

strategies for budgeting such as revenue centers and outsourcing, and other financial arenas are explored, with the pros and cons laid bare.

The third section, "Virtual Worlds," explores in depth the experiences of Columbia University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Britain's Open University, and a consortium of southern universities in the field of virtual or distance education. While the faddish fascination with virtual education vanished with the burst of the dot-com bubble, there is much to learn about higher education in the marketplace in reviewing institutions' decision making during this period. Why did some universities invest millions in distance education joint ventures while others decided to offer free access to their curriculum on the web? And why did the Open University, successful in many countries, not appeal to students in the United States?

In the final section, "The Smart Money," Kirp examines for-profit institutions such as DeVry University and information technology certification courses in the Silicon Valley, as well as issues of public-private research partnerships as seen at the University of California, Berkeley.

Underlying the book are a range of academic values and concerns, ranging from academic freedom and the ability to publish research findings in a timely manner to control of the curriculum, traditionally the purview of the faculty. In much of the book, it is the tension between academic and market values that gives the book its edge and its ability to give advancement officers insights into professors' perspectives on marketing and private fund raising. Only occasionally does the book become tedious, such as in the section describing in detail the

turmoil around star philosophy professors at NYU.

Overall, the book is well worth reading. And so too is the 2003 volume *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education*, by former Harvard president Derek Bok (Princeton University Press). Each takes a different approach to many of the same issues. Both volumes put the work of educational advancement

in the larger context of higher education culture and management, making them valuable reading for serious professionals.

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