

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

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Volume 8

Article 5

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November 2017

## Book Review: The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere

Bruce Henderson

Western Carolina University, henderson@email.wcu.edu

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### Recommended Citation

Henderson, Bruce (2017) "Book Review: The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere," *Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University*. Vol. 8 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/ts/vol8/iss1/5>

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**Kevin Carey. *The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2015. 288 p. ISBN 9781594634048. \$16.00.**

Kevin Carey, Director of the nonpartisan public policy institute Education Policy Program at New America, believes that American higher education is in dire straits. In his brief history of higher education, Carey describes the development of the modern “hybrid university.” The problems in higher education can be blamed to a large degree on the combining of the two functions of the hybrid that he thinks should have been kept separate: research and teaching. In Carey’s view, professors at the hybrid university teach poorly because they were never taught how to teach and because they are much more interested in doing their research. The poor teaching of the hybrid university should have led to its demise long ago, but self-interested faculty and administrators have monopolized the dissemination of knowledge through accreditation processes under their own control. This monopoly has resulted in skyrocketing costs to students as the general public has become convinced that students need a Rolls Royce education when they really only need a Vespa education.

The hybrid university, happily in Carey’s view, will not last much longer. It is about to be replaced by the University of Everywhere. Traditional classroom teaching is being replaced by MOOCs and other online offerings taught by the biggest experts in every field and online learning that will be guided by robot tutors that will personalize learning based on big data collected from thousands of learners. Once the grip of the accreditation process has been broken, academic credits will be replaced by badges and certificates. Uninformative diplomas will be replaced by real information on what has been learned in the form of course syllabi, class notes, problem sets, and meta-analytics describing the University of Everywhere’s contributions to student learning.

There are very good critiques of this book elsewhere (I particularly recommend one by Frank Pasquales at <https://lareviewofbooks.org/review/the-university-of-nowhere-the-false-promise-of-disruption>) and trenchant analyses of the technology Carey has so much faith in (see a funny one by Michael Shea in *The Skinny*, <http://www.theskinny.co.uk/tech/features/moocs>, describing the 5-week course on astrobiology and the search for extraterrestrial life from the University of Edinburgh that he successfully completed in one day with breaks for doing laundry and playing football). I will focus my critique on the particular relevance of the book to those of us at the comprehensive university.

First, much of the description of the hybrid university simply does not apply to the comprehensive universities. A negative correlation between teaching and research has never been established anywhere, but the history of the comprehensive universities is one where teaching is taken seriously. For most of us, our research is more like a hobby than an all-consuming distraction from students, who are often involved in the research we do conduct.

Second, what hurrying to disentangle teaching from research has failed to see is that everything university professors do is based in their disciplinary expertise. There is no meaningful teaching, community service, or research without the expertise of the scholar.

Third, the pedagogy of the University of Everywhere betrays a view of the learner that is simplistic and passive. At the comprehensive universities, good teachers have always viewed learning as a constructive process that relies on the dynamic interplay among students, teachers, and what is to be learned. Despite gratuitous references to the late developmental psychologists Vygotsky and Piaget, who would have denied the possibility, Carey appears to believe that there is an easily defined body of knowledge and skills that can be acquired from watching and listening with the help of tutoring programs designed with magical metadata obtained from huge datasets. If the life of learning were only so simple.

While I believe many of Carey's arguments are largely specious, arrogant, and even silly, I believe we ignore what he is saying at our students' peril. The arms race in building fancy dorms, recreation centers, and football teams has made all colleges, including the comprehensive universities, too expensive. Although faculty salaries have had relatively little to do with exploding costs, we are not blameless. Even at comprehensive universities there has been a relentless move by the tenured faculty to reduce teaching loads, mostly without a concomitant increase in research productivity. Faculty members too often have passed on all kinds of tasks to professional administrators and adjuncts, including advising, tutoring, sponsoring student organizations, clinical supervising, and introductory-level instruction, shifts that have greatly increased student expenses. On too many campuses faculty members are largely absent, raising questions about the need for expensive infrastructure. Finally, if all we do is transfer information rather than stimulate curiosity by engaging our students in critical and creative thinking, we do indeed invite the end of our colleges.

Bruce Henderson  
Western Carolina University