

HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



Democracy Divided

Articles

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The *Higher Education Exchange* is founded on a thought articulated by Thomas Jefferson in 1820:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

In the tradition of Jefferson, the *Higher Education Exchange* agrees that a central goal of higher education is to help make democracy possible by preparing citizens for public life. The *Higher Education Exchange* is part of a movement to strengthen higher education's democratic mission and foster a more democratic culture throughout American society. Working in this tradition, the *Higher Education Exchange* publishes case studies, analyses, news, and ideas about efforts within higher education to develop more democratic societies.

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DOES HIGHER EDUCATION UNDERMINE DEMOCRACY?

Alex Lovit

In this essay, HEX coeditor Alex Lovit reviews The Meritocracy Trap: How America's Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite by Daniel Markovits (Penguin Press, 2019); The Years That Matter Most: How College Makes or Breaks Us by Paul Tough (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019); The Merit Myth: How Our Colleges Favor the Rich and Divide America by Anthony P. Carnevale, Peter Schmidt, and Jeff Strohl (The New Press, 2020); Unequal Higher Education: Wealth, Status, and Student Opportunity by Barrett J. Taylor and Brendan Cantwell (Rutgers University Press, 2019); The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students by Anthony Abraham Jack (Harvard University Press, 2019); and The Tyranny of the Meritocracy: Democratizing Higher Education in America by Lani Guinier (Beacon Press, 2015).

American higher education institutions describe themselves as united in the service of democracy. The nation's largest higher education organization, the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), comprises 1,400 institutions, ranging from globally renowned research universities to local community colleges, all "making quality and equity the foundations for excellence in undergraduate education in service to democracy."¹ This rhetoric is supported not only by the dedication of millions of faculty, administrators, and staff, but also by the breadth of popular enrollment in colleges and universities across the country. In 1940, less than 5 percent of Americans held undergraduate degrees. In recent years, a record high of almost 70 percent of recent high school graduates immediately enroll in college,² and college graduates have commanded a wage premium over high school graduates of nearly 50 percent.³ Whereas college was once reserved for a small elite, American citizens increasingly see higher education as necessary for economic security. Higher education also significantly impacts both political engagement and political beliefs.⁴ At first glance, this appears to be a system working as intended—broadly accessible and providing both economic and civic benefits for individual graduates and for the nation as a whole.

But the AAC&U's unified commitment to democracy and growing enrollments on a national scale conceal the gaps between institutions and students. Higher education's democratic promise is belied, at least to some degree, by the enormous disparities of resources between different colleges and universities and the gaps in opportunities accessible by their graduates. This review discusses six recent books, all of which criticize the US higher education system for contributing to the nation's socioeconomic divides. These books vary widely

in tone, scope, and intended audience, but together they constitute an emerging literature that describes colleges and universities as generators of inequality and social division. By these accounts, rather than providing opportunities for social mobility, higher education primarily functions to reinforce existing hierarchies, fuel resentments, and even, for many Americans, symbolize the inaccessibility and indifference of socioeconomic elites.

These books have significant limitations. They focus almost exclusively on undergraduate education, giving little attention to research, service, com-

Higher education's democratic promise is belied, at least to some degree, by the enormous disparities of resources between different colleges and universities and the gaps in opportunities accessible by their graduates.

munity engagement, or other university activities outside the classroom. And they see education primarily through the lens of the economic benefits that students receive. Even as many of them argue for an expanded understanding

of higher education's public purposes, few pages are devoted to expounding on this idea. These books also focus an amount of attention on elite colleges and universities vastly disproportionate to the small minority of students who attend these institutions. And they do not consider higher education's contributions to antidemocratic professional cultures. However, despite these limitations, the authors make compelling arguments that current trends are unsustainable, which deserve the attention of everyone invested in the future of higher education. For those of us who are concerned about higher education's relationship to democracy, these books also provide troubling indications that American colleges are doing more to widen divisions and deepen misunderstandings than they are to unite citizens in common causes.

In *The Meritocracy Trap*, Yale law professor Daniel Markovits lays out a broad argument about growing inequality in the United States. The statistics are familiar: the richest Americans have been gaining increasing shares of both wealth and income in recent decades, while working- and middle-class incomes have remained relatively stagnant.⁵ But the strengths of Markovits' book are the broad sociocultural critique he builds on the foundation of these facts, his insights into the dissatisfactions of the elite who are the apparent beneficiaries of this inequality, and the fluidity of his writing. Markovits argues that American society has been captured by a cult of meritocracy, producing inequality that

is insidious precisely because those at the top actually do have elite educational credentials, specialized skills, and industrious work ethics. “Meritocracy deprives those at the bottom of an oppressor against whom to assert high-minded claims of justice.”⁶ Privilege feeds upon privilege. “Economic inequality begets political inequality, and meritocracy undermines democracy.”⁷ “Meritocracy . . . creates feedback loops between education and work, in which inequality in each realm amplifies inequality in the other.”⁸

This last point, of course, captures the relevance of *The Meritocracy Trap* for higher education. A college degree, and especially one from an elite institution, is necessary to gain access to a high-paying career. Markovits points to a survey in which “nearly 50 percent of America’s corporate leaders, 60 percent of its financial leaders, and 50 percent of its higher government officials attended only twelve universities.”⁹ These elite institutions are so selective that qualifying for admission usually requires committed, intensive, and, crucially, expensive preparation. In the Ivy League and at a handful of other elite universities, “more students come from families in the top 1 percent of the income distribution than from the entire bottom half.”¹⁰ Furthermore, huge endowments enable these elite institutions to spend much more lavishly on educational and student services than their less selective peers, which are more reliant on revenue from tuition. “College, simply put, not only increasingly concentrates training in students from rich households but also increasingly subsidizes the training that the rich receive.”¹¹ In Markovits’ telling, higher education functions as an essential link in a modern aristocracy, sustained

by elite educations and specialized skills. One of the strengths of *The Meritocracy Trap* is its insights into the costs that this system imposes even on those on top of this social hierarchy. Elite

“Nearly 50 percent of America’s corporate leaders, 60 percent of its financial leaders, and 50 percent of its higher government officials attended only twelve universities.”

jobs pay exorbitantly, but they also require never-ending evaluation and grueling work schedules. Higher education also plays a role here: “Elite schooling—exquisitely calibrated to build and measure the self as human capital—trains elite workers in the meritocratic art of instrumentalizing and exploiting themselves.”¹²

Education journalist Paul Tough’s *The Years That Matter Most* is less polemical than *The Meritocracy Trap*, but his conclusions are broadly similar. “Through our current system of higher education, we seem to have reconstructed,

in the guise of openness and equality, an old and established aristocracy, one in which money begets money, wealthy families remain wealthy for generations, and young people . . . born without privilege and power, stay stuck at the bottom.”¹³ Tough is particularly critical of the influence over American colleges and universities wielded by two organizations: the College Board, which administers the SAT test most colleges require as an entrance exam, and the *US News and World Report*, which publishes influential rankings of American colleges. Tough points out that SAT scores correlate more strongly with family income than they do with academic success in college. Nevertheless, selective institutions use the test to sort applicants and to demonstrate their prestige in the *US News* rankings. In large part because family income plays such a large role in determining SAT scores, this leads to a system in which “the colleges that can most easily afford to admit low-income students are the ones that admit the fewest.”¹⁴ Meanwhile, less prestigious colleges, under more pressure to generate tuition revenue, have limited resources to subsidize education for students who cannot pay their own way. “Admissions professionals are well aware that they spend much of their time and energy looking not for more high-achieving low-income students but for more low-achieving high-income students.”¹⁵

One of the strengths of *The Years That Matter Most* is that Tough personalizes these trends through interviews with students applying to and attending a range of institutions. These stories capture the psychological impact of the high stakes of college admissions and success: “When young people make their decisions today about college,

“When young people make their decisions today about college, they often are motivated less by hope and more by fear.”

they often are motivated less by hope and more by fear.”¹⁶ Tough’s psychological insight extends to his analysis of the reasons students (especially first-generation and low-income students)

transfer from the most demanding programs, which might prepare them for the most remunerative careers, or drop out of college without receiving any degree:

In . . . periods of dramatic change, we get a lot of messages from the world that are ambiguous. . . . We are much more open—for better or worse—to new stories about who we are. . . . “I failed my first chemistry test. Is that normal, or am I in the wrong major—or at the wrong university?”¹⁷

Universities that succeed in graduating less privileged students—and Tough chronicles several such programs—often provide additional academic and social

support structures but also promote positive self-understanding for students: You can succeed. You belong here.

The Merit Myth, by Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce researchers Anthony Carnevale and Jeff Strohl and journalist Peter Schmidt, extends this now familiar argument: “College has become the capstone in an inequality machine that raises and perpetuates class and race hierarchies and sinks the lower classes.”¹⁸

The authors point out that colleges’ attempts to climb the *US News* rankings concentrate more attention on applicants’ SAT scores than on graduates’ skills and inhibit institutional diversification:

“Americans may still look to higher education as the clearest pathway to opportunity, but only about 14 percent express a great deal of confidence in the higher-education sector to deliver on that promise.”

The *U.S. News* rankings helped give rise to the now common belief that colleges can be judged based on inputs—the students they admit, the faculty members they hire, the financial support they receive—rather than on the output that is their *raison d’être*, the learning and growth they produce in their students.¹⁹

The focus on ranking also inhibits colleges from crafting and pursuing distinct missions, programs, and teaching methods, thereby inhibiting diversity in the system at large.²⁰

When disadvantaged students do gain access to selective institutions, they graduate at high rates, but more often, they attend open-access colleges with significantly lower completion rates. (This is true even accounting for SAT scores or high school GPA.) Carnevale, et al., write:

With so many people shut out of selective colleges or poorly served by nonselective ones, it’s no wonder that public support for higher education has declined over time. Americans may still look to higher education as the clearest pathway to opportunity, but only about 14 percent express a great deal of confidence in the higher-education sector to deliver on that promise.²¹

Higher education scholars Barrett Taylor and Brendan Cantwell support this argument about the inequalities among higher education institutions with rigorous quantitative data in *Unequal Higher Education*. The core of their book is a study encompassing almost all four-year colleges in the United States between 2005 and 2013. Using four measures—selectivity, enrollment, per-student

spending on education and related activities, and the ratio of that spending to tuition revenue—Taylor and Cantwell sorted colleges and universities into seven categories ranging from “Super Elite” institutions that spent an average of \$93,134 on education per student, only 27 percent of which was derived from tuition, to “Vulnerable” institutions that spent an average of \$18,772 per student, 82 percent of which came from tuition payments.²² As these figures indicate, student experiences and the value they can expect to derive from a college education vary widely across institutions.

The picture of higher education drawn by these numbers is a portrait of extremes. Among the most elite institutions, large endowment-fueled budgets mean that even though students do pay relatively high tuition bills (many of them can afford it), “Every dollar of tuition netted nearly three dollars of subsidy.”²³ At the other end of the spectrum are the institutions that Taylor and Cantwell label “Vulnerable” because they rely on tuition to fund basic operations and often struggle to attract paying students. “When tuition dependence was combined with low demand for admission, institutions became Vulnerable because their primary source of revenue was students who showed little interest in paying to attend.”²⁴ With few other sources of revenue to draw on, these colleges provided much more modest subsidies on student tuition for educational spending. Indeed, “about one in six Vulnerable institutions spent less on students than students paid to attend.”²⁵ Between the two extremes of elite, stable universities and poor, struggling colleges, the latter is much more representative of American higher education. In Taylor and Cantwell’s categorization, an absolute majority of institutions across the country can be labeled “Vulnerable.” (Because these colleges tend to be relatively small, a majority of institutions does not translate to a majority of students; a little less than a quarter of US college students in four-year programs attend these institutions.)

Furthermore, during the nine years examined in *Unequal Higher Education*, declining public financing, insecure endowments, and fluctuating enrollments pushed more and more institutions into the “Vulnerable” category—from 58 percent of all institutions in 2005 to 62 percent in 2013.²⁶ This trend was particularly pronounced among public universities, which have become more and more reliant on tuition in recent years. In 2005, less than one percent of all public institutions fit into this category, but by 2013, more than 11 percent were “Vulnerable.” “Very few publics relied on tuition for half of their spending in 2005, but most did so by 2013.” Taylor and Cantwell argue that institutions have responded to risks of downward mobility by competing in rankings, attempting to diversify revenue sources (including more attention to securing

research funding and soliciting donations) and investing in student amenities. For students, the broad range of institutions ensures access to higher education, but with many colleges' low graduation rates and high reliance on tuition, access is not the same thing as genuine opportunity. According to the authors,

Something like half of all students face a stark choice: go to college and be forced to borrow with uncertain prospects of graduating, thereby taking on financial risk, or do not go to college and face the near certainty of a life characterized by poor wages and economic insecurity.²⁷

Where *Unequal Higher Education* supports the critique of meritocratic inequality in higher education with quantitative research, education researcher Anthony Jack's *The Privileged Poor* does the same with qualitative research. Built upon hundreds of interviews with students at "Renowned University" (almost certainly Harvard, where Jack completed his doctorate and now teaches), this book captures the alienation and indignity experienced by low-income students of color who have gained entry into an elite institution. Of course, students of this description comprise only a small minority at these universities, where many of their classmates have grown up wealthy. But even though Jack is telling the story of only a small minority of poor students in a small minority of wealthy institutions, he does uncover telling disjunctures. "Renowned University" does not appear particularly ill-intentioned in these pages, but it does institute policies without fully considering the impact on low-income students, including closing dining halls during breaks and employing work-study students for janitorial services. Strikingly, the pathways for poor students of color into elite institutions are so narrow that "over 50 percent of the lower-income Black undergraduates who attend elite colleges get there from boarding, day, and preparatory high schools—well-endowed, highly selective schools."²⁸ These students still suffer from disadvantages and exclusion, but they are already acculturated into many unwritten rules of life at an elite, wealthy, White-dominated educational institution. Students with more typical experiences of poverty (such as attending underfunded public high schools), whom Jack labels "Doubly Disadvantaged," are less prepared to seek assistance outside of class hours or to build relationships with faculty. "The Doubly Disadvantaged express strong faith in the idea of meritocracy—believing that focusing on 'the work' is enough for success—but they actually stand to lose the most for believing so."²⁹ Faith in pure meritocracy hinders these students from reaping the full rewards of their position atop higher education's meritocratic hierarchy.

Taken as a whole, these books present a convincing and compelling case that the United States' system of higher education tends to reinforce socioeconomic

divisions. Both well-resourced and struggling institutions may prepare students to participate in democratic society, but students' economic prospects are largely determined by the institution in which they enroll, before they attend their first class. Class mobility is not the same thing as democratic equality, but neither are the two concepts completely unrelated—a point many of these books make. Markovits argues that “democratic equality is the only cure for meritocracy’s discontents.”³⁰ Carnevale, Schmidt, and Strohl state that, “Education has become the foundation of American democracy, but educational inequality is destabilizing the framework and crumbling the façade.”³¹

Practical solutions are more elusive. Most of these books conclude with lists of recommendations. Markovits suggests threatening to revoke nonprofit status to force elite universities to expand their enrollments. Taylor and Cantwell recommend increasing state investment in higher education, targeting particular categories of institutions. Carnevale, Schmidt, and Strohl present a long list of proposals, including reducing the weight of the SAT in admissions decisions, abolishing legacy admissions, requiring universities to enroll a quota of low-income students, and shifting rankings from focusing on inputs (such as SAT scores) of entire institutions to focusing on outcomes (job placements, for example) of particular programs. But all of these authors recognize that implementing any of these

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proposals would require a significant shift in the public's view of higher education. Taylor and Cantwell “call for a new public compact between higher education institutions, citizens, and governments . . . [in which] higher education should be understood as a worthwhile endeavor that produces benefits both for individuals and society at

large.”³² Similarly, Tough asks his readers to “begin by embracing a principle that seemed self-evident to Americans a century ago but is less widely acknowledged today: *Our collective public education benefits us all.*”³³ The problem with calling for radical changes in policy and public opinion, of course, is that these recommendations do not provide practical next steps, and, ultimately, acquit higher education from making changes in the absence of a broader political reform movement.

A slim volume a few years older than the other books discussed in this essay, by Harvard law professor Lani Guinier, suggests one solution to this dilemma. In *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy*, Guinier rehearses a familiar complaint against the current structure of higher education: “We are credentializing a new elite by legitimizing people with an inflated sense of their own merit and . . . unwillingness to open up to new ways of problem solving.”³⁴ But Guinier’s proposed solution to this problem is at the level of the classroom, rather than thoroughgoing institutional reform. She argues for an alternative understanding of merit, based in ability to collaborate and motivation to learn: “The

In order to fulfill its democratic mission, American higher education must confront the inequalities in its own ranks and its own contributions to antidemocratic trends.

skill sets promoted by systems of democratic merit will better serve the challenges of a twenty-first-century world, which demands complex problem solving and collaboration among diverse individuals.”³⁵ *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy* describes several successful educational experiments focused on collective rather than individual achievement, including the Posse Foundation, which recruits groups of underprivileged students to attend top-ranked universities, and pedagogies that focus on preparing students to explain concepts to each other. Guinier does not mention classroom deliberation, but as a practice of addressing shared problems in a group through diverse perspectives, deliberation certainly promotes “democratic merit.”

The literature described in this review focuses on the economic divisions between citizens who have received college degrees and those who have not. But higher education is also associated with deeper cultural divisions, including by shaping how professionals think about their relationship with the public. Former editor of the *Higher Education Exchange*, David Brown, pointed out in 2014, “The culture of professionalism too often stresses individual achievement, ignoring shared social life—rendering service rather than developing collective capacity.”³⁶ In this sense, higher education not only widens socioeconomic divides by providing already privileged students access to in-demand professional skills, but also contributes to an antidemocratic professional culture, which further alienates citizens from professional institutions. (Even Guinier’s vision of education to build democratic merit is more focused on developing cooperative workplace culture than on reimagining relationships between professional institutions and the public.)

As the books discussed here demonstrate, colleges and universities are both victim and generator of wealth inequality—with a small number of lavishly resourced institutions providing elite educations and many others locked in an existential battle to raise revenue from tuition to keep the doors open. These gaps are likely to only widen in coming years due to the extension of previous trends and the disparate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Faculty and staff at every level of this higher education hierarchy are genuinely committed to fostering democratic citizenship for their students and their communities, and every issue of *Higher Education Exchange* includes examples of democratic innovation in pedagogy and partnership at a range of colleges and universities. However, in order to fulfill its democratic mission, American higher education must also confront the inequalities in its own ranks and its own contributions to antidemocratic trends.



NOTES

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- ³ Elise Gould, *State of Working America Wages 2018* (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2019), <https://www.epi.org/publication/state-of-american-wages-2018/> (accessed July 27, 2020).
- ⁴ Andrew J. Perrin and Alanna Gillis, “How College Makes Citizens: Higher Education Experiences and Political Engagement,” *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5 (2019): 1-16, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2378023119859708> (accessed July 27, 2020); *A Wider Ideological Gap Between More and Less Educated Adults*, Pew Research Center, April 26, 2016, <https://www.people-press.org/2016/04/26/a-wider-ideological-gap-between-more-and-less-educated-adults/> (accessed July 27, 2020).
- ⁵ Katherine Schaeffer, *6 Facts about Economic Inequality in the US*, Pew Research Center, February 7, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/07/6-facts-about-economic-inequality-in-the-u-s/> (accessed July 28, 2020).
- ⁶ Daniel Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap: How America’s Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019), 63.
- ⁷ Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*, 54.
- ⁸ Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*, 27.
- ⁹ Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*, 183.
- ¹⁰ Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*, 137.
- ¹¹ Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*, 139.
- ¹² Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*, 155.

- ¹³ Paul Tough, *The Years That Matter Most: How College Makes or Breaks Us* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019), 20.
- ¹⁴ Tough, *The Years That Matter Most*, 170.
- ¹⁵ Tough, *The Years That Matter Most*, 167.
- ¹⁶ Tough, *The Years That Matter Most*, 257.
- ¹⁷ Tough, *The Years That Matter Most*, 227.
- ¹⁸ Anthony P. Carnevale, Peter Schmidt, and Jeff Strohl, *The Merit Myth: How Our Colleges Favor the Rich and Divide America* (New York: The New Press, 2020), 4.
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- ²⁰ Carnevale, Schmidt, and Strohl, *The Merit Myth*, 184-185.
- ²¹ Carnevale, Schmidt, and Strohl, *The Merit Myth*, 185.
- ²² Barrett J. Taylor and Brendan Cantwell, *Unequal Higher Education: Wealth, Status, and Student Opportunity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 60-61.
- ²³ Taylor and Cantwell, *Unequal Higher Education*, 67.
- ²⁴ Taylor and Cantwell, *Unequal Higher Education*, 13.
- ²⁵ Taylor and Cantwell, *Unequal Higher Education*, 95.
- ²⁶ Taylor and Cantwell, *Unequal Higher Education*, 30.
- ²⁷ Taylor and Cantwell, *Unequal Higher Education*, 136.
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- ²⁹ Jack, *The Privileged Poor*, 127.
- ³⁰ Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap*, 285.
- ³¹ Carnevale, Schmidt, and Strohl, *The Merit Myth*, 190.
- ³² Taylor and Cantwell, *Unequal Higher Education*, 153-154.
- ³³ Tough, *The Years That Matter Most*, 329.
- ³⁴ Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy: Democratizing Higher Education in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 25.
- ³⁵ Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy*, 123.
- ³⁶ David Warfield Brown, *America's Culture of Professionalism: Past, Present, and Prospects* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 133.

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LEILANI (LANI) FROST is a communication major with a focus on journalism and media and a minor in Chinese at Saint Louis University. She is a member of the Asian American Association, KSLU College Radio, and the University Honors Program and serves as the social media and graphic design chair for the university's Korean Student Association. After taking Flannery Burke's Origins of the Modern World course, she had the opportunity to complete the courses History of China and Japan After 1600 and History of the Saint Louis Region. Frost hopes to use the knowledge that she has gained through all these classes to better understand and advocate for her community.

JAMES GARRETT is the program administrator for the Talloires Network. Before beginning his work at Tufts University, he was program manager for Tulane University's Mellon Graduate Program in Community-Engaged Scholarship and senior program coordinator for internships and international programs at the Center for Public Service. He holds a bachelor's degree from Davidson College and a master's degree from the University of Louisville. He is a student in the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College.

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LORLENE M. HOYT is the executive director of the Talloires Network. While teaching at MIT, she founded MIT@Lawrence, an award-winning city-campus partnership. Her book *Regional Perspectives on Learning-by-Doing: Stories from Engaged Universities around the World* (Michigan State University Press, 2017) illustrates how universities can mobilize their resources to create more equitable and prosperous communities while also educating civic leaders. Hoyt is a research professor in urban and environmental policy and planning and faculty member of the Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University, as well as a visiting scholar at Brown University. She holds a PhD in city and regional planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

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STEPHANIE KING is the director of strategic initiatives for ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. As the previous director for civic engagement and knowledge community initiatives at NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, she directed its LEAD Initiative and co-managed/co-created the Voter Friendly Campus program. King's work in higher education since 2009 includes the areas of student activities, orientation, residence life, and civic learning and democratic engagement. She earned her MA in psychology from Chatham University and her BS in biology from Walsh University. She contributed to the 2018 NASPA publications *Effective Strategies for Supporting Student Civic Engagement* and *Higher Education's Role in Enacting a Thriving Democracy*.

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BRENT A. MARSH is assistant vice chancellor for student affairs and dean of students at the University of Mississippi. With more than 20 years of experience serving in student affairs across a variety of institutional settings, Marsh has presented numerous sessions at national and regional conferences and has published on a variety of topics, including Esports and personal finance. Marsh joined the group of authors for this publication via his role as director of the NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education Public Policy Division. Previously, he served NASPA as the Region IV-West coordinator of regional finances and as chair of the Student-Athlete Knowledge Community.

DAVID MATHEWS, president and CEO of the Kettering Foundation, was secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Ford administration and, before that, president of the University of Alabama. Mathews has written extensively on Southern history, public policy, education, and international problem solving. His books include *Politics for People: Finding a Responsible Public Voice*, *Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy*, *The Ecology of Democracy: Finding Ways to Have a Stronger Hand in Shaping Our Future*, and *With the People: An Introduction to an Idea*.

ALLISON MISPAGEL is a senior at Saint Louis University, majoring in accounting with a minor in business analytics. Allison did not have much interest in history before taking Flannery Burke's Origins of the Modern World course but afterward gained a new interest in the subject. She is a member of Saint Louis University's Honors Program and through this program had the opportunity to be a teaching assistant for an introduction to honors course. After college, Allison hopes to get a master's degree in accounting and sit for the Certified Public Accountant exam.

ERIN PAYSEUR OETH is interested in exploring the public square—how we develop civic learning, skills, and practices to thrive together in community. As a research fellow with the Kettering Foundation, she serves on several national research exchanges. Payseur Oeth has presented nationally with colleagues, including recent sessions on exploring faith groups as civic actors and using public deliberation in church and community decision-making. She holds a BA in religion/philosophy from Presbyterian College and an MEd in higher education and student affairs from the University of South Carolina. Before joining the University of Mississippi as a project manager in community engagement, she held positions at Baylor University and Columbia College.

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