Bringing the State Back In: Promoting and Sustaining Innovation in Public Higher Education

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Abstract

Since the well-known failures of many experimental colleges and programs in the 1960s and 1970s, policymakers and scholars are often cynical about the possibilities for organisational innovation, particularly within public universities. Public university innovation is possible, however, when organisational actors seek to institutionalise reform and use the legitimacy of reform to obtain adequate human and financial resources. An illustrative case study of California State University at Monterey Bay is used to describe how institutionalisation processes can be used to establish, support and expand public university innovation, which may be increasingly crucial to meet political and competitive demands for university adaptation.

Introduction

In 1988, California State University (CSU) decided to create a new university campus at San Marcos, and the next year a president and 11 'founding faculty' were hired to run the new university (Tierney, 1993). The president and the faculty worked together in a committee of the whole for a year to establish the principles of the new institution. The new university would have no academic departments, would focus on teaching and learning, and would be committed to diversity of both people and ideas. Within three years, however, it became clear that while San Marcos would be a fine institution of higher education, it would not be innovative in the ways that the founders wanted or expected. Students, faculty, administrators and the local public remain largely pleased with the progress of the new university, but it is not a model of innovation.

The student population in California continued to grow during the 1990s, and CSU decided to build another campus, this time in Monterey. Beginning in 1994, a new provost and 13 'planning faculty' worked together in a committee of the whole for eight months to establish the principles of the new institution. The new university would have no academic departments, would focus on teaching and learning, and would be committed to diversity of both people and ideas. Within three years, it became clear that the campus was still forcefully committed to its innovative curriculum and assessment practices, its diversity and its interdisciplinarity. Today, the campus is known across the USA as an example of successful innovation.

Why did one campus persist in pursuing its early goals while the other moved in a less innovative direction? Each campus seemed to face similar conditions in its policy and fiscal environments, and both were new institutions within the same system of public higher education. The goals for both institutions were nearly identical. Yet one campus has maintained its commitment to innovation, and implemented it successfully, while the other has become much like other institutions within the CSU system.

This paper examines the process underlying the development of California State University at Monterey Bay (CSUMB). Previous analyses have seen the success of CSUMB residing in the substantial political and financial support provided to the campus during its early years, especially when compared with other CSU campuses (Chance, 1997). While this support was undoubtedly important, this explanation is not sufficient in light of the San Marcos experience. In an attempt to provide a more complete explanation, I use a conceptual framework drawn from neo-institutional theory. I argue that the founding faculty and senior administrators at CSUMB acted strategically as 'institutional entrepreneurs' in their successful effort to promote and develop the reforms that form the core of the CSUMB experience. This was facilitated by a series of public policy actions and inactions that allowed the innovation to thrive within an organisational environment that is often hostile to difference and innovation. This helps to explain why competing institutional influences towards both convergent and divergent change were ultimately resolved in favor of an innovativeness that so many other universities in the USA have failed to sustain.

Conceptual background

There is an extensive literature in the field on innovation in higher education. In the USA, the literature focuses almost exclusively on the

factors underlying the rise and inevitable fall of college innovation (Grant and Riesman, 1978; Dill and Friedman, 1979; Levine, 1980). Levine (1980), for example, argues that innovation will be sustained only when the innovation is both compatible and profitable within the goals of the organisation. Successful innovations will either be diffused throughout the organisation or enclaved within a programme with clear boundaries. While the analysis is original and useful, it tends to ignore the role of the institutional environment, in particular public policy, in determining whether innovations are compatible or profitable. It also consigns innovations that have adapted to the institutional environment to termination – a euphemism for complete failure – when the innovation may continue to be highly influential at an individual or group level.

Internationally, the literature on innovation is far more optimistic in its approach, and more catholic in its typologies of innovation (e.g. Becher and Kogan, 1980; Cerych and Sabatier, 1986; van Vught, 1994). Innovation in the US context tends to be characterised as transformational, such as the curriculum reforms at Santa Cruz in the 1960s or the overhaul of St. John's College in the 1930s (Grant and Riesman, 1978). As a result, the innovation is often characterised in a heroic manner, where individual leaders play the salient role in ensuring distinctiveness, and public policy plays a relatively minor role. In an international context, innovation is often simply a proxy for organisational change more broadly, and thus the role of public policy is more prominent. Yet nearly everyone acknowledges that innovation is only successful once it has been institutionalised into university structure and culture.

To deal with these conceptual issues, this paper uses a framework drawn upon the institutional theory of organisations. Institutional theory considers the organisation within an open system, and is thus sensitive to the role of the organisation's environment in institutional development (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott, 1995). At the same time, institutional theory is primarily concerned with the cultures, structures and routines within organisations that provide stability and meaning to social behavior. These social structures can be used to understand organisational development and change, and more specifically, the role that these cultures, structures and routines play in the legitimacy and stability of the organisation over time.

As a result, institutional theory was primarily used as an explanation for convergent organisational change, when organisations adapt to their environments by becoming more similar. Early formulations of institutional theory, however – now usually regarded as the 'old institutionalism'

– acknowledged that organisations could have leadership and engage in strategic action within the limits of the institutional structure. As stated so eloquently by Selznick (1957), institutional actors may act as leaders by providing a 'guiding hand' that steers the organisation among the multitude of institutional constraints. While the organisation would undoubtedly be buffeted by these existing constraints, and may well drift among them in the appropriate direction, a leader can guide the organisation more smoothly by developing its mission and distinctive competence.

Building upon these ideas, DiMaggio (1988) argued that the concept of *institutional entrepreneurs* could provide leverage in understanding the role of strategic action in creating new institutions and supporting divergent organisational change. New institutions arise, DiMaggio argues, 'when organised actors (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realise interests that they value highly' (p. 14). Institutional entrepreneurs use their knowledge and social skill to inspire the commitment of new organisational members and promote the institution's values, norms and beliefs. At the same time, they are constrained by elements in the institutional environment, particularly public policy, that control organisational resources, shape public perceptions, and will ultimately help determine the survival of the institution (Bastedo, 2005). Divergent organisational change, or transformative innovation, is thus only possible when it is consonant with the desires and expectations of policymakers.

Design, data and interpretation

The research design consists of a critical case study of CSUMB, from 1988–2004. This approach was selected to permit a richness of detail in the sites and to increase the richness of the potential analysis (Yin, 1994). Following the principle of triangulation of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994), three kinds of data were collected: semi-structured interviews with faculty, administration, and system leadership, content analysis of archival documents, and media coverage. Most interviews were recorded on audio tape and transcribed, although some interviews were transcribed with notes by informant request. Interviews were conducted over time, with the first interviews conducted in 1998 and the final interviews conducted in 2004.

Interview participants were assured of their confidentiality and all asked not to be identified by name; instead they will be identified by their broad position in the organisation. There were interviews with 18 total informants, including founding faculty members, current faculty,

senior-level administrators and system-level actors. The interviews were triangulated with important internal memoranda obtained from founding faculty and administrators, and with external reports provided by the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) and the Western Association for Colleges and Universities (WASC), which is responsible for CSUMB's regional accreditation. As is standard for qualitative research, the data were open coded, examined for both emergent themes in addition to concepts driven from the theoretical framework (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Historical background

In the fall of 1995, CSUMB opened its doors to 650 pioneering students on the former U.S. Army Base at Ford Ord. Campus planners designed CSUMB to be innovative in its educational programmes, to provide a new model for organising and operating a university, and to serve historically under-represented groups. Curricular innovations included creating interdisciplinary 'centres' instead of departments as a primary mode of academic organising, integrating service and learning, and preparing students to be engaged in both local and global communities. Campus planners also proposed a governance structure that would give campus decision makers autonomy within the CSU system and would encourage shared decision making among all members of the campus community.

The decision to convert the Fort Ord land into a university was by no means a *fait accompli*. A community task force, the Fort Ord Reuse Group, was appointed by then-Congressman Leon Panetta to consider multiple options for the site. They considered options ranging from amusement parks to industrial parks and office buildings. The idea to convert the base into a university campus seems to have come from the president of San Jose State University (SJSU), who was interested in establishing a satellite campus on the base. The SJSU president met with Congressman Panetta in July 1991 to discuss the possibility (Chance, 1997).

State higher education officials showed interest in the idea immediately. CSU Chancellor Barry Munitz, a powerful official within the state and higher education nationally, visited the Fort Ord facility in October with CPEC representatives and State Senator Henry Mello. That same month, acting on Munitz's recommendation, the CSU Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to start exploring the Fort Ord option. By early 1992, concept papers for an entirely new campus of the CSU

system were prepared, and by early fall, the state Legislature approved $1 million for planning and feasibility studies. By the end of the year, CSU had opened a planning office for the campus in nearby Seaside, and a $100 million request for funds to convert the campus was submitted to the Department of Defense by Congressman Panetta (CPEC, 1994).

The swift movement of both CSU officials and local politicians can be attributed to a number of factors. California higher education, and especially CSU, was under incredible pressure to expand capacity to handle a demographic wave of college students called Tidal Wave II. The California Higher Education Policy Center (CHEPC), headed by Patrick Callan, predicted that 488,000 additional students would seek higher education in the California system by 2005 (CHEPC, 1996). They estimated that accommodating these new students would require an infusion of $5.1 billion in state funds between 1996 and 2006. Due to California's rapidly changing demographics, it was expected that these new students would be largely minorities, low or middle class, and underprepared for college coursework.

Local politicians, on the other hand, were dealing with the economic impact of the Ford Ord base closure. It was estimated that the base closure would result in the loss of $731 million in salaries due to the elimination of 2,773 Army jobs, and over 25,000 jobs in the private sector that relied on the Army's business. There was also the possibility that the Army would take up to four years to clean up the base's environmental problems, leaving an $809 million hole in the local economy (Chance, 1997). National politicians were also interested in seeing the Ford Ord experiment succeed, to demonstrate that base conversions could be an opportunity for economic development.

Chancellor Munitz wanted to create an innovative campus from the very beginning. Talking to the *Los Angeles Times* in November 1992, he commented that CSUMB would have 'touch-tone registration, an entirely new library concept, fax machines to distribute articles instead of subscribing to expensive periodicals, and much more' (Trombley, 1992, p. A1). Later, he would float the idea of 'charter universities' that had the power to change degree requirements, faculty hiring and teaching techniques. CPEC had its own ideas. They proposed that the campus be a national leader in incorporating technology, and recommended that the campus adopt 'Total Quality Management' principles to ensure student satisfaction (CPEC, 1993). In the end, however, none of these ideas would form the core of the CSUMB experience.

In spring 1993, Chancellor Munitz appointed Steven Arvizu, a former dean at CSU Bakersfield, to be interim provost of the new campus. That

June, CSU circulated a progress report called 'Ft. Ord – Plan for Planning and Vision Statement'. Their vision was for the campus to be a 'prototypical university for the next century', that was innovative, had a prestigious faculty, had academic programmes that 'transcend traditional walls and shape the institution' (Chance, 1997, p. 4). Although the report indicated CSU's support for an innovative campus, it did not give clear guidance as to exactly what kinds of innovations it supported. It was Arvizu's mandate to operationalise CSU's vague ideas for the new campus. He traveled around the state to elicit community input for the development of the school's curriculum, and wrote a vision statement proposing that the curriculum be organised around academic clusters rather than traditional departments, including the sciences (especially marine, atmospheric and environmental), the visual and performing arts, languages, cultures, and international studies, international business and 'futuristic education'.

The keys to the campus were presented to college officials in July 1994. Provost Arvizu started the hiring process for founding faculty, who would have only eight months to get the campus up and running. Nevertheless, CSUMB received over 3,000 applications for the first spots (Goldsmith, 1997). Ultimately, there would be 13 planning faculty; slightly over half of those positions would go to CSU faculty, and all of the faculty were allowed to maintain their tenure and appointments at their home campuses. The amount of work to be done was staggering: developing curriculum, facilities, administration and governance are not simple even for traditional institutions, but each of these needed to be consonant with the vision statement of the new institution. The result was high anxiety.

> We were suddenly told we were teaching in the fall, and this was a great shock to many of us. A great shock since our contracts were fairly explicit in saying otherwise. In many senses, it was completely ridiculous to imagine that you could screen 5,000 applications, develop an academic organisational structure, develop a philosophy that is truly innovative, develop 11 interdisciplinary majors, serve as the mentor for new faculty coming in August, and teach! That's just not reasonable. It's truly not, and we all knew that. It was a disturbing moment for us – that moment where there was a clash between what we had been told and promised and the reality we faced. (Goldsmith, 1997, p. 113).

Although the faculty believed that CSUMB was in their hands, public policy was driving the timeline for change. In frustration, eight of the original 13 planning faculty would return to their home campuses after the first year, and Provost Arvizu would depart soon after.

If the past was any indication, this is the point at which the innovation being planned at CSUMB would terminate (Levine, 1980). Nearly all of the original planning faculty were gone, as well as the initial leader. Public policy makers were more interested in finding a productive use of a former military base, and meeting the growing needs of the state, than supporting curriculum innovations. Despite these transitions, however, key policy makers were committed to supporting the innovative campus, and new university faculty and leadership were socialised into the CSUMB project in a way that sustained its progress.

The institutionalisation project

The CSUMB leadership made a number of strategic actions designed to ensure that the curricular reforms at the core of the institution's academic values were disseminated and inculcated in all new faculty, administrators and students. Structures were established to ensure that the new values were infused throughout the various components of the new university. In addition, there were a number of organisational processes that were designed to magnify the effects of the new organisational structures. As a result, the CSUMB leadership was successful in creating a coherent and cohesive community of practice that is committed to the reform effort. Nonetheless, there are also strong pressures in the university's environment that may serve to deinstitutionalise these new reforms.

Developing an organisational identity

Clark (1970) argues that distinctive colleges create organisational sagas that help define the shared beliefs, values and norms of the college constituents. He noted that new organisations are 'widely considered to be the preferred condition for innovating leadership', but that crises and evolutionary openness in established institutions were other possible seeds of innovation (p. 237). Clark identifies four elements that helped sustain the innovation and ultimately led to the organisational sagas that defined the character of the institution:

1. Committing the staff, particularly the senior faculty, to the new innovation;
2. Creating a curriculum that embodies the distinctiveness of the college;
3. Taking advantage of the external social base of the college, which provide both students and resources; and
4. Institutionalising the values and beliefs of the new college through beliefs and ceremonies centred on the organisational ideology.

The organisational saga is facilitated through a charismatic leader, whose 'personal magnetism combines with the normal authority of the position to give a man uncommon influence' (Clark, 1970, p. 241). The charismatic president works over a long period of time to inculcate these sagas in the campus community. In the lingo of neo-institutional theory, the charismatic president (and in this case, provost) served as institutional entrepreneurs who used their social skill to promote positive outcomes for the institution.

CSUMB had an indefatigable (if controversial) president, Peter Smith, who worked to create an organisational culture that supported the distinctiveness of the new college. Founding provost Steven Arvizu was, by all accounts, highly skilled in developing a sense of community values through the development of the vision statement and the recruitment of new faculty. For example, the vision statement for the college is framed and given as gifts to staff members, and is displayed in nearly every office on campus. One dean's three-foot tall copy of the vision statement dominates an entire wall of his office. At the beginning of each year, all faculty, staff and students read and sign the vision statement, reinforcing its values with ceremony and ritual.

The organisational identity on campus was reinforced by the repetition of language. Both administrators and faculty reiterated certain phrases during interviews, each of which has a long history of being used from the first days of the campus (Goldsmith, 1997). For example, multiple people said the goal of the campus was to 'beat swords into plowshares', apparently a phrase used by President Smith to describe the work of the campus. Two people said that working on campus was 'like building a car – while you are driving it at 60 miles an hour'. Four of the informants described CSUMB as a 'work in progress'. Appropriately, this phrase also served as the title of the founding year's course catalog.

Clark argues that 'faculty dedication seems the key component in the making of a college saga' (Clark, 1970, p. 246). As described earlier, 13 planning faculty helped develop the campus's academic plan during the eight months prior to the opening of the campus. In addition, according to one administrator, both faculty and staff routinely work 70 plus hour weeks. They continue to be instrumental in the development of both policy and academic governance (WASC, 1998). According to one dean, the most important criteria for hiring new faculty is their singular commitment to the campus vision statement.

One difficulty for the campus is developing the social base, 'groups and aggregations in the larger society from which they draw money, moral support, personnel, and students' (Clark, 1970, p. 250). Like Reed

College, which nearly collapsed due to antagonism with its home city, Monterey Bay has not been accepted uncritically by its surrounding community. An editorial in the San Francisco Chronicle derided the campus as 'CSU Diversity', committed to the narrow, politically correct values of its radical faculty but completely out of step with the needs of California students (Saunders, 1997). This view does not seem common; there does seem to be a consensus, however, that CSUMB is somewhat disconnected from the city. Faculty and administrators plan to address this through expansion of service learning efforts in the city of Monterey and by engaging city officials. As of fall 2004, more than 1,000 students were being placed in the community for service learning projects each semester.

Curriculum and pedagogy

CSUMB is guided by a series of core academic values, including technology infusion, multiculturalism, globalism, ethical reflection and practice, interdisciplinarity, applied learning, service learning, and collaboration. These academic values are reflected in the campus vision statement and, according to the founding faculty and senior administrators, are at the core of the academic reform at CSUMB. The founding faculty and administrators were not involved in the writing of the vision statement – it was authored by former provost Steven Arvizu – but were recruited to CSUMB based on their commitment to that vision. Commitment to the vision statement was an important criteria for the selection of not just the founding faculty, but for *all* new faculty. (As one administrator said, 'the vision statement is our anchor'.)

To further promote these values, all new faculty and students in the first year spend a week discussing the vision statement in the academic ProSeminar. The faculty thus acted strategically to promote the development of institutional values among faculty and students, who necessarily have preconceived ideas about how a university should operate. These discussions served not just to inculcate values, but also to create an important sense of community and shared concerns among the varied constituents of the new university.

The interdisciplinary structure of the university was designed, in part, to make faculty loyal to the university rather than to their own discipline or specialisation, fostering a community of locals rather than cosmopolitans (Gouldner, 1957). CSUMB originally had interdisciplinary centres in Arts, Human Communication and Creative Technologies; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Collaborative Education and Professional Studies;

Science, Technology and Information Resources; and Graduate Studies. There were also several interdisciplinary institutes within these core centres, including Community Networking, Pacific Rim Studies, and Earth Systems Science and Policy.

In 2003, however, all of the centres became departments or colleges, and all but one of the institutes were subsumed in the departments. CSU policy defines centres and institutes as adjacent to existing department, and they cannot offer curricular programmes. Many of the titles have been changed as well, to make them more generic and inclusive; for example, 'Management and International Entrepreneurship' is now 'Business and Human Communication'. As one staffer argued, 'There's been a pretty holistic series of renaming that has gone on.' There is a perception that members of the community, and the minority and first-generation students the campus wanted to attract, were 'turned off by the new-ageiness or . . . just the incomprehensibility of our programmes.'

A community of values continues to be built through university-wide programmes that are required for all students. In the ProSeminar, first-year students develop individualised learning plans that will determine the course of the student's education at CSUMB, and will be criteria for evaluating the student's progress towards graduation. Service learning is required of every student, and is designed to integrate real-world experiences into the student's education while simultaneously creating a concern for community values and needs among students (CSUMB Service Learning Institute, 1996). Faculty are expected to make service learning a routine part of their courses and are encouraged to make creative use of the institute. This is not just community service. Asking colleges to develop service learning requirements is different, one faculty member argues. It is 'requiring colleges to show every one of their graduates that they will have a pathway to learn about their civil and social responsibilities.'

Encouragement from outside agencies has been absolutely crucial. The regional accreditation team from the WASC called CSUMB a 'national model', which is inevitably quoted across CSUMB's marketing materials (WASC, 1998). The CSU administration used CSUMB as its model for curriculum reform for its state strategic plan, Cornerstones (CSU, 1998). At the state level, California Governor Gray Davis called for a community service requirement in 1999, and this was reiterated by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2004 (Gunnison and Burdman, 1999). The requirement was for only 16 hours of community service, however, and one CSU staffer noted that Schwarzenegger's proposal argued for no additional administrative or fiscal resources, which he deemed 'truly preposterous'.

The key component of the CSUMB reform is outcomes-based education (OBE). OBE is designed to tightly couple learning and assessment in university education by designating a set of learning outcomes and designing specific assessment mechanisms to measure those outcomes. CSUMB has identified 13 University Learning Requirements (ULRs) that must be completed by each graduating student. These range from mathematics communication to creative expression and democratic participation. Each student's individualised learning programme, constructed in the required ProSeminar, must demonstrate how the student will develop each of these competencies.

These have been developed in the face of substantial constraints placed by the CSU system. The CSU system, for example, has clear expectations for the size and cost of classrooms, when a traditional classroom structure may not fit the campus's pedagogical needs. (In one glaring example, it was impossible to structure a room so that students sat in a circle, rather than in rows.) There is also a statewide general education requirement to deal with, which matches very poorly with the ULRs required by CSUMB. A plan 'backward maps' the ULRs onto the CSU general education requirements, as one faculty member termed it, but there seems to be a strategic amnesia about its clear gaps, which could not sustain even casual scrutiny. 'I joked early on that I should be writing notes on the front of institutional struggle,' one staff member said. 'It's like you see these chunks of structure hitting us.'

Drawing political and financial resources

Despite these bureaucratic constraints, CSUMB drew upon increasing political support, based upon the uniqueness of the university, its potential for reforming higher education, and its creative use of existing state assets. The result was an unprecedented series of federal and state investments. Without these investments, the campus could not have survived. Over its first 10 years, CSUMB received nearly twice as much per full-time student as other CSU campuses. In 1997–1998, for example, state funding per full-time student in CSU was $6,883. State funding per full-time student at Monterey Bay was $12,445 (CSU, 1998).

Even more vital, however, was a series of large investments by the federal government, funneled through the Department of Defense. This was facilitated by a series of key powerful leaders who supported the CSUMB experiment.

> We had the then Chief of Staff to the President of the United States [Leon Panetta] who was one of the patron saints of this place . . . We had a Congressman here was wholly supportive and in a majority position in Congress, who had succeeded Leon Panetta in his Congressional seat. That was Congressman Sam Farr. We had a newly minted president of the university who was a former Republican moderate member of Congress with the privilege of former members who didn't have to stand outside the chamber. He could walk on the floor of Congress and talk to former colleagues about the things that we needed and how it might be achieved. And in the end, we had a vice president who was a former lieutenant colonel in the United States Army and who was garrison commander of the base who knew where every bone was buried.

The result was the funneling of over $70 million to the campus in defense department funds. 'The fact is,' one staff member noted, 'for the first 8 or 9 years the state didn't put a dime into us outside of the operating budget. Every dime we had came from a run of very successful earmarks we got from the federal government, that frankly, very few people gave us credit for in advance.' These funds had the effect of muting the voices of conservatives who did not appreciate the state operating funds being invested in CSUMB, or its non-traditional curriculum focused on multiculturalism and other issues perceived to be, politically, in the liberal domain.

It would be simpler to argue that these funds were the reason CSUMB's innovation survived, and therefore use a more traditional resource dependence approach to organisational analysis (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). The commitment of these resource providers, however, was built through their commitment to the innovation being developed at CSUMB, and its progressive institutionalisation across the campus. Leon Panetta, for example, was perhaps the key person who ensured that resources flowed to CSUMB through his unique political influence. It cannot be underestimated, however, that Panetta was involved in the design of CSUMB from the beginning, and articulated its mission to be innovative in mission and curriculum, to be a shining light in the field of higher education. Indeed, when Panetta retired from politics, he and his wife joined CSUMB as directors of the Leon & Sylvia Panetta Institute for Public Policy.

Implications

While the future is always uncertain, informants at CSU and the state all seem to have accepted that CSUMB will remain part of the CSU system at its existing funding levels. Campus administrators pointed out to us

that many of the strategic goals of CSU, such as developing effective assessment of student outcomes, mimic what has already been established at Monterey Bay (CSU, 1998). Most of the time, CSUMB has been left alone to develop itself independently.

The Monterey Bay campus faces a number of problems that may crush the innovation before it can be firmly established, however. There are strong pressures in the institutional environment to mimic similar structures in the organisational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The threat of 'regressing towards the mean', as one campus administrator called it, is very real as the campus expands and is threatened with the loss of its small, interactive environment. The president himself acknowledged that some dilution of the original vision is 'probably inevitable'.

As a result of its favourable funding situation, CSUMB presently enjoys low class sizes and student–faculty ratios, operating more like a liberal arts college than a comprehensive state university. Enrolment was scheduled to reach 5,000 by 2002, and the ultimate capacity of the campus has been estimated at 12,500 (Chance, 1997). As of fall 2005, however, enrolment was at 3,773, almost entirely full-time students (CSUMB, 2006). In 2005–2006, funding per full-time enrollment (FTE) student was just $12,077, less than it had been in 1998, a result of pressure within CSU to 'normalise' CSUMB's funding. Nonetheless, the campus still receives about $1,000 more per FTE student than other CSU campuses.

The challenge has been how to 'scale up' the CSUMB experiment in ways that lower costs per student without relying upon traditional pedagogies or methods of student evaluation. Unfortunately, coordinating service learning opportunities and assessing students on 13 separate competencies in meaningful ways are both resource and time intensive. As a result, increasing enrolment may not lead to the necessary cost savings. Plans to reach an additional 12,500 students through distance learning efforts, for a total of 25,000 students by 2010, proved highly unrealistic, although they did serve to satisfy state leaders until the campus could get on its feet.

From an institutional perspective, mimetic isomorphism, the results of an uncertain environment and cognitive structures that privilege what we already know, is a constant threat to innovation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). When the campus academic plan was being developed in early 1995, the president felt the need to warn the faculty: 'You have invented prematurely the clusters and how faculty will be organized . . . It takes you back to old ideas. You need a different conversation' (Goldsmith, 1997). Like the transition from interdisciplinary clusters to

departments, outcomes-based assessment could be replaced by grades and credits, and service learning could simply become mandatory community service.

The success of CSUMB could be a seen as a perfect storm of resources, leaders and politics. If that is true, its success would not be particularly generalisable to other public colleges. There is evidence this is true; the CSU's newest campus, Channel Islands, has failed to develop a service learning component on its own. Faculty and staff within CSUMB, however, are convinced that their work is absolutely replicable. 'It comes down to time on task,' says one senior administrator.

> We have nine brains thinking about everything from TB testing to curriculum to transportation to social justice. We meet all the time and we are being paid to do that, whereas at every other campus you have . . . instead of me being a full-time person in this area I'd be a faculty on leave or half-time release from my department. And I might have one full-time person to help me with partnerships and maybe one half-time staff person. That's it . . . And every one of these issues is complex.

This is where the role of public policy and the state is crucial. While the institution can define a vision, socialise new members to that vision, and commit its internal resources to support that vision, public policy must provide enough slack for the institution to meet those goals. With that level of support and legitimacy, universities can innovate if they build commitment and a clear organisational identity. Towards the end of one interview, I implied that much of one administrator's success must have to do with his elite university PhD and status as a national leader in his field. He quickly contradicted me. 'You know, I don't think so,' he replied. 'I think that is a myth . . . [we] just have a lot of creative people to help us through the kinks.'

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