



Special Issue of Strategic Organization: “Strategic Management Theory and Universities”

Strategic Organization

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Overview

The university—or what Clark Kerr ([1963] 2001) called the “multiversity”—is a complex organization that has been of interest to scholars in a range of disciplines, including economists studying decision-control structures (Fama and Jensen, 1983; Williamson, 1983) or the role of the university in industrial innovations (Rosenberg and Nelson, 1994), organization theory scholars (e.g. Cohen et al., 1972), and sociologists (e.g. Zajac and Kraatz, 1993).

The subject of the university is more than an academic question. Its importance in public life has long been recognized. In the United States, federal funding for university-based basic research has been an important component of science and innovation policies. University ownership of inventions developed under federal funding was a major change that resulted from the Bayh–Dole Act of 1980.

A considerable body of academic research assesses the effects of intellectual property and technology transfer policies on research activity and on academic and business communities. Recognizing a dual focus on both academic research and commercially oriented activities, Ambos et al. (2008) argued that universities can resolve tension by being ambidextrous and creating dual structures. Lockett et al. (2005) highlighted the business development capability of technology transfer offices, selecting inventions with greater commercialization prospects. Studies have also focused on the roles and capabilities of technology transfer offices and pointed out limitations (Siegel et al., 2007). Zucker et al. (1998) supported the idea that star scientists are also successful in generating commercial benefits while maintaining the excellence of their academic research.

While these studies draw attention to the administration of universities, they do not fully address strategic management issues confronting universities. Universities face great pressure to make higher education more affordable and more effective. The universities’ success in attracting resources and high-caliber staff and students, and perhaps fundamentally changing the universities’ business model, may be essential for long-run survival. Few theoretical frameworks have been employed to address organizational changes and strategies in universities and in helping university leaders respond to challenges and achieve strategic goals. Better strategic management and planning is crucial to sustainable success (Cyert, 1983).

In this Special Issue, we seek contributions that will help us understand how complex non-profit organizations like universities can be better managed to sustain and enhance by establishing new business models (and associated revenue streams), while avoiding (or managing) conflicts and sustaining commitments to the fundamental purpose of the university. We hope to spur contributions on how improved management theory can be applied to running the university. We encourage submissions that offer illumination and insight into the strategic management of universities by using strategy concepts (e.g. competitive advantage, organizational capabilities, business model designs, sustainable performance), important phenomena (e.g. the role of technology in education, resource-allocation decisions, university governance, innovation ecosystems), or theoretical streams (e.g. historical, sociological, and economic analyses of universities; evolutionary approaches to strategy; leadership; dynamic capabilities; strategic behavior).

Research questions that might be addressed include the following:

Sources of competitive advantage of the university

- How do the intangible resources (such as histories and cultures) of *particular* universities impact their performance and ability to transition?
- How and why do certain universities gain a competitive advantage in rapidly changing markets?
- How significant are operational performance differences among universities within and across nation states?

Governance and organizational boundary issues

- How does the rise of academic entrepreneurship and university–industry partnerships affect the governance of research universities?
- How are successful universities effectively linked to external stakeholders?
- How can universities overcome localization and reach out for distant and new knowledge and resources?

Strategy formulation and implementation in universities

- What parallels exist between levels of strategy? Do strategies made at the individual faculty level affect strategies at the campus management level, or vice versa?
- How can faculty be best engaged in long-run strategic issues?
- How important are resources and capabilities in formulating strategies in universities?
- Can business model redesigns (reconfigurations) help transform smaller colleges?

Strategic change in universities

- What are the primary sources or drivers of institutional change?
- What factors influence how universities respond to organizational change?
- What do university administrators do if faculty becomes a roadblock to necessary change?

Timeline and submission instructions

All submissions should be uploaded to the Manuscript Central/Scholar One website: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/so> between 1 and 31 December 2015. Once you have created your account (if you do not already have one) and you are ready to submit your paper, you will need to choose this particular Special Issue from the drop down menu that is provided for the type of

submission. Contributions should follow the directions for manuscript submission described on the *Strategic Organization's* (SO) webpage: <http://soq.sagepub.com>. For queries about submissions, contact SO!'s editorial office at strategic.organization@hec.ca. For questions regarding the content of this Special Issue, contact one of the guest editors.

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