

# **Academic capitalism and the entrepreneurial university: some perspectives from the Americas**

*Capitalismo acadêmico e universidade empresarial: algumas perspectivas  
das Américas*

*El capitalismo académico y la universidad empresarial: algunas  
perspectivas de las Américas*

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**Abstract:** Since the Worldwide Financial Crisis of 2008, higher education institutions around the world have been forced to change their financial practices to focus on the bottom line. One such approach is academic capitalism, the heart of which is the entrepreneurial university which views faculty members as producers of capital (not educators), students as consumers (not learners), and business/industry, accreditors, and NGOs as valued business partners. This article defines academic capitalism,

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reviews the research literature, presents perspectives of academic capitalism in the Americas and discusses the implications of academic capitalism for Latin America. The article ends using anthropophagi to assess what is useful about academic capitalism for Brazil.

**Keywords:** Academic capitalism. Entrepreneurial universities. Higher education.

**Resumo:** *Desde a Crise Financeira Mundial de 2008, as instituições de ensino superior em todo o mundo foram forçadas a mudar suas práticas financeiras para se concentrar em fatores não acadêmicos, o que foi chamado de capitalismo acadêmico. No centro do capitalismo acadêmico está a universidade empresarial, que considera os professores como produtores de capital (não educadores), estudantes como consumidores (não aprendizes) e empresas/indústria, credenciadores e ONGs como valiosos parceiros de negócios. Neste artigo define-se capitalismo acadêmico, revisa-se a literatura de pesquisa, discutem-se perspectivas do capitalismo acadêmico das Américas e discutem-se as implicações do capitalismo acadêmico para a América Latina. No artigo finaliza-se com o uso da antropofagia para avaliar o que é útil sobre o capitalismo acadêmico para o Brasil.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Capitalismo acadêmico. Universidades empresariais. Educação superior.*

**Resumen:** *Desde la Crisis Financiera Mundial de 2008, las instituciones de educación superior de todo el mundo se han visto obligadas a cambiar sus prácticas financieras para centrarse en la línea de fondo no académicos, que se llama capitalismo académico. En el corazón del capitalismo académico está la universidad emprendedora, que considera a los profesores como productores de capital (no educadores), estudiantes como consumidores (no aprendices), y negocios / industria, acreditadores y ONGs como valiosos socios de negocios. Este artículo define el capitalismo académico, revisa la literatura de investigación, discute perspectivas del capitalismo académico en las Américas y discute las implicaciones del capitalismo académico para América Latina. El artículo termina utilizando antropofagia para evaluar lo que es útil sobre el capitalismo académico para Brasil.*

**Palabras clave:** *Capitalismo Académico. Universidades Empresariales. Educación Superior.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

One criticism of higher education in the United States is its spiraling cost of higher education. With public subsidies at low levels, the average tuition at a public 4-year university is \$3,980 USD/year (COLLEGE BOARD, 2015). Contrasted with that figure is \$56,000 USD for total cost (tuition + books + living expenses) at the most expensive private university. As a result, the debate on how to reduce costs for students and their families focuses on the twin objectives of reducing costs and obtaining new revenue in the form of patents, grants, contracts, gifts from corporations and individuals, fees for services, and other entrepreneurial activities. Collectively, these activities are labelled academic capitalism, a term developed by Slaughter and Rhoades (2009). They define academic capitalism as “the pursuit of market and market-like activities to generate external revenue.” With the emphasis on generating revenue, academic capitalism forces universities to become more entrepreneurial and corporate; thus the term entrepreneurial university. In the entrepreneurial university, the emphasis is on generating income and cutting costs. Faculty, staff, and administrators who excel with this approach are rewarded.

The move to the entrepreneurial university has been the trend in higher education institutions in Brazil, and in Latin America in general. Globalization, with the prioritization of the Knowledge Society, and with the focus on the development of high level human resources, focuses on universities. In Brazil, the 1996 legislation provides for flexible higher education institutions in all sectors and supports an expansion of the higher education system, especially in the private for-profit sector.

This article reports mainly the literature on academic capitalism and presents, perspectives, data and examples of academic capitalism from the Americas, and discusses the implications of academic capitalism for Latin American universities. We end with a discussion of academic capitalism in Brazil.

## 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much has been written about universities operating within a contemporary neoliberal economic framework, including the specific rise of what Slaughter and Leslie (1997, p. 6) termed the “academic capitalist knowledge-learning regime.” Slaughter and Leslie argued that universities behave like businesses in the commercial

marketplace and the influence of market forces on post-secondary education is stronger than ever before. Slaughter and Leslie mark the beginning of academic capitalism as the effect of the neoliberal ideology of President Ronald Reagan in the U.S. of the 1980s. Reagan's neoliberal state was, first and foremost, concerned with advancing the interests of select large corporations and private individuals, rather than the greater good of society (BALODANO, 2012), breaking with the philosophy of education as a public good to benefit all citizens. Neoliberal policies promote privatization, industrial deregulation, commercialization, accountability for public agencies, and seek to promote the so-called "new knowledge economy" (SLAUGHTER; RHOADES, 2009). Within a neoliberal context, higher education has been transformed effectively from a public good to a commodity that can be sold to benefit the narrow interests of wealthy individuals and corporations. The 2008 global recession amplified critiques concerning college affordability (SLAUGHTER; RHOADES, 2016), reinforcing the belief that post-secondary education is a costly private good.

Rather than a single policy or trend, academic capitalism is a framework implemented by a network of actors through federal and state governmental policies, public attitudes, and university practices. Academic capitalism affects nearly every part of a university and every stakeholder – including students, faculty members, administrators, university advisors, and society at large. We maintain that these changes have caused many negative effects.

One indication of the trend is the rapid rise of educational costs for students and their families (SPELLINGS, 2006). A significant reduction in public support for higher education is the leading cause for this increase (PRIEST; ST. JOHN, 2006; WINSTON, 1997, p. 279). Also contributing to rising costs, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004, p. 279) argued that universities have not done enough to reduce expenses, as they initiate market/market-like strategies to "exploit the commercial potential of students" and have profited from an increase in non-instructional auxiliary services. Prior to the 1980s, in the United States, many poor and middle-income students benefitted from federal and state grant aid to pay for college; now these programs have been replaced by loan programs which require students accrue considerable debt to finance their education (SELINGO, 2015). In the book *Academically Adrift*, Arum and Roska (2010) argued that decades of rising educational costs have not led to gains in student learning. Taken together, the net effect of academic capitalism is a more expensive and lower quality education.

Faculty members and researchers are another population negatively influenced by the neoliberal academic capitalist regime. The face of the faculty has changed significantly; for example, the number of part-time and adjunct faculty has increased while the number of tenured positions has declined (AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, 2014). Across the United States, faculty members have had limited wage growth and faculty unions have reduced bargaining power (DONOGHUE, 2008; SLAUGHTER; LESLIE, 1997). Concurrently, the number of highly-paid administrators and administrative professionals, called “administrative bloat” have increased (BOK, 2002; CHACE, 2013). The lasting effect of these shifts in the workforce is an erosion of shared governance and increasing tension between faculty and administrators (BOWEN; TOBIN, 2015; GERBER, 2014; GINSBERG, 2013; GONZALES, 2012). Graduate student funding has also been negatively influenced and many graduate students face increasingly limited prospects to secure full-time employment in the professoriate.

While the faculty workforce has been negatively influenced by academic capitalism, the secondary consequences to society are even more severe. Academic capitalism threatens the core tenets of academic freedom – a founding principle that ensured an investment in pure research to advance the interests of society. The total investment in federal grants to promote scientific research remained stagnant since the 1980s (SLAUGHTER; RHOADES, 2004). The line has been blurred between the university campus and the marketplace. Faculty members must compete with one another for limited research funding and often, research projects with commercial potential are more likely to receive funding. Within the prevailing academic capitalist framework, support for faculty research has been diverted away from the arts and humanities and toward science and technology disciplines where breakthrough discoveries can be patented and sold (SLAUGHTER; RHOADES, 2004). Many business leaders now serve on the governing boards of private universities where they advise administrators and promote policies to further advantage their commercial interests (SLAUGHTER; RHOADES, 2016). Due to the changes in research funding, universities no longer operate as independent agencies to promote the social good – faculty members must adapt their research agendas according to the priorities of granting agencies and large corporations.

As Slaughter and Leslie (1997, p. 6) warned, the political and economic changes that enabled the growth of academic capitalism are “global and structural;

they are not likely to disappear and allow us to return to business as usual.” Whereas it is unlikely that the damage will ever be fully reversed, we argue that public re-investment in higher education may be a first step in beginning to curb this harmful trend. By shining a light on data on research and teaching at one public research university in the United States, we seek to bring awareness and ultimately action to these troubling concerns.

One particularly troubling organizational tool used by academic capitalists is disruptive innovation, which uses technology to restructure entire industries and decrease costs dramatically to enroll new student-customers. For example, online university courses appeal to many students due to the perception of being a more convenient, less rigorous, and less expensive alternative to traditional education. In the United States, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and online-only institutions, many of which are for-profit, have emerged to fill the gap left by traditional colleges and universities by serving non-traditional or low-income students. Christensen and Eyring (2011, p. 47) asserted that disruptive innovation is making “a complicated and expensive product [in this case, a college education] simpler and cheaper” in order to attract a “new set of customers.”

Originally, Christensen and Eyring (2011) defined “disruptive innovation” as a technology-based theory for the business world; however, they have since applied it to education. According to this theory, disruptive innovation has the potential to take over an existing industry such as higher education. Christensen believes institutions like the University of Phoenix will be “the leader of tomorrow”, while half of the traditional colleges in the United States could face bankruptcy in 15 years (GOLDSTEIN, 2015, p. 2). Lepore (2014) insists Christensen’s theory, which originated in the computer disk-drive industry, is historically flawed and should not be applied to colleges and universities.

Using Harvard University as the example for *The Innovative University*, Christensen and Eyring (2011) asserted that the modern university should include a mix of face-to-face and online learning. Institutions failing to disrupt this way will inevitably face hardships, while those that “marry the benefits of the on-campus experience and online learning” will experience growth “beyond what they imagined” (CHRISTENSEN; EYRING, 2011, p. 51). This is done by making drastic philosophical changes that attack centuries of educational tradition, such as cutting down on full-time, tenured faculty members and employing contingent faculty willing to commit

to faster and cheaper degree offerings; establishing “heavyweight innovation teams”; and cutting back on the number of graduate programs offered, and offering “no frills” four-year university degrees for \$10,000 USD (LEPORE, 2014; CHRISTENSEN; EYRING, 2011).

While Lepore (2014) argues that this type of system pertains more to business start-up companies and not universities, the strategy of disruptive innovation has been adopted by many prestigious research universities, because some leaders argue that higher education should be held to the same standards as other industries – those that do not innovate and disrupt will cease to exist (SELINGO, 2012).

Supporters of Christensen and disruptive innovation believe online degrees and other cost-cutting methods will reinvent higher education, but empirical research has yet to back up this theory. The next section of this article presents a case study of a research university that employs a strategy of innovative disruption by hiring cheaper academic professionals to replace tenured faculty members and reduce costs.

### 3 ACADEMIC CAPITALISM AND THE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

In the U.S., faculty salaries account for just under 17% of a university’s budget (IPEDS, 2015). Academic capitalism suggests that some faculty work can be accomplished by much cheaper academic professionals who do not have the salaries, academic freedom, and other job protections of the faculty. In the U.S. the “other professional” category (i.e., academic professionals) is the fastest growing job title in universities (SNYDER; DILLOW, 2011). In fall of 2011, nearly 25% of employees at the most prestigious and productive Research Intensive (R1)<sup>6</sup> universities in the U.S. were categorized as other professionals (Table 1). Since the 1970s, full-time faculty positions at American universities decreased by 26% and full-time tenure-track positions dropped by 50%. Further, full-time, non-tenure track faculty jobs increased by 62%, with a 76% increase in part-time instructional staff. Fully 70% of

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<sup>6</sup> The *Carnegie Classification™* is the framework for recognizing and describing institutional type in U.S. higher education. The category *doctoral universities* includes institutions that awarded at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees during the current year. Doctoral universities are further defined by their research productivity – R1: Doctoral Universities have the highest research activity; R2: Doctoral Universities have a higher research activity; and R3: Doctoral Universities have a moderate research activity. The scheme also has categories for Master’s colleges and universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, specialty schools and tribal (Native American) colleges.

all employees who teach in American universities are now off the tenure track and part time (AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, 2014).

Table 1 – R1 universities in fall 2011, by percent of academic professionals

<b>Research I Institution</b>	<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>Other Professionals</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Arizona State University-Tempe	12006	3732	31.08%
Boston College	4601	866	18.82%
Boston University	12213	2211	18.10%
Brandeis University	2289	520	22.72%
Brown University	4870	988	20.29%
California Institute of Technology	3989	1095	27.45%
Carnegie Mellon University	7577	1850	24.42%
Case Western Reserve University	5705	1841	32.27%
Clemson University	6282	1528	24.32%
Colorado State University-Fort Collins	9593	2684	27.98%
Columbia University in the City of New York	19324	3805	19.69%
Cornell University	12873	2548	19.79%
CUNY Graduate School and University Center	2299	295	12.83%
Duke University	18976	7087	37.35%
Emory University	11994	4519	37.68%
Florida International University	5954	1431	24.03%
Florida State University	9580	2198	22.94%
George Mason University	6032	971	16.10%
George Washington University	6827	2535	37.13%
Georgetown University	6518	1104	16.94%
Georgia Institute of Technology-Main Campus	10526	4121	39.15%
Georgia State University	6402	1278	19.96%
Harvard University	18969	4271	22.52%
Indiana University-Bloomington	11473	2664	23.22%
Iowa State University	8586	2037	23.72%
Johns Hopkins University	21119	7102	33.63%
Kansas State University	6357	1819	28.61%
Louisiana State University	8855	2639	29.80%
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	14570	2341	16.07%
Michigan State University	14404	4975	34.54%
New York University	18643	3225	17.30%



<b>Research 1 Institution</b>	<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>Other Professionals</b>	<b>Percent</b>
North Carolina State University at Raleigh	11627	3281	28.22%
Northeastern University	5616	1428	25.43%
Northwestern University	9629	3104	32.24%
Ohio State University-Main Campus	30643	11522	37.60%
Oregon State University	6397	1193	18.65%
Pennsylvania State University-Main Campus	18126	4015	22.15%
Princeton University	6788	2117	31.19%
Purdue University-Main Campus	15163	2529	16.68%
Rice University	2963	716	24.16%
Rutgers University-New Brunswick	11235	3085	27.46%
Stanford University	16653	4350	26.12%
Stony Brook University	5561	1186	21.33%
SUNY at Albany	3554	858	24.14%
Syracuse University	6546	962	14.70%
Temple University	9109	2069	22.71%
Texas A & M University-College Station	10866	2765	25.45%
Texas Tech University	6557	879	13.41%
The University of Tennessee-Knoxville	15520	2602	16.77%
The University of Texas at Arlington	5697	558	9.79%
The University of Texas at Austin	24765	4688	18.93%
The University of Texas at Dallas	4253	971	22.83%
Tufts University	5791	1462	25.25%
Tulane University of Louisiana	5338	488	9.14%
University at Buffalo	6294	1513	24.04%
University of Alabama at Birmingham	9761	3388	34.71%
University of Arizona	15161	5407	35.66%
University of Arkansas	6032	1666	27.62%
University of California-Berkeley	15957	4259	26.69%
University of California-Davis	16167	3821	23.63%
University of California-Irvine	9965	2371	23.79%
University of California-Los Angeles	22803	6802	29.83%
University of California-Riverside	5223	1094	20.95%
University of California-San Diego	15873	4702	29.62%
University of California-Santa Barbara	6417	1403	21.86%

<b>Research 1 Institution</b>	<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>Other Professionals</b>	<b>Percent</b>
University of California-Santa Cruz	4888	1229	25.14%
University of Central Florida	6822	1501	22.00%
University of Chicago	11478	3715	32.37%
University of Cincinnati-Main Campus	9436	1978	20.96%
University of Colorado Boulder	9818	924	9.41%
University of Connecticut	11519	4321	37.51%
University of Delaware	5820	1255	21.56%
University of Florida	18070	3528	19.52%
University of Georgia	13236	3839	29.00%
University of Hawaii at Manoa	6150	1613	26.23%
University of Houston	6761	2079	30.75%
University of Illinois at Chicago	15282	5715	37.40%
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	16436	3273	19.91%
University of Iowa	13060	4706	36.03%
University of Kansas	10261	2784	27.13%
University of Kentucky	13627	3194	23.44%
University of Louisville	7924	2482	31.32%
University of Maryland-College Park	13451	2661	19.78%
University of Massachusetts-Amherst	7975	1376	17.25%
University of Miami	11697	1392	11.90%
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	24674	7603	30.81%
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	22608	4308	19.06%
University of Mississippi	3878	881	22.72%
University of Missouri-Columbia	19681	4297	21.83%
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	8423	1902	22.58%
University of New Mexico-Main Campus	10156	2621	25.81%
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	15472	4514	29.18%
University of North Texas	5525	978	17.70%
University of Notre Dame	6634	1901	28.66%
University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus	7508	1785	23.77%
University of Oregon	6074	1201	19.77%
University of Pennsylvania	16771	4668	27.83%
University of Pittsburgh-Pittsburgh Campus	14928	4716	31.59%

Research 1 Institution	Total Employees	Other Professionals	Percent
University of Rochester	10133	1772	17.49%
University of South Carolina-Columbia	8542	2907	34.03%
University of South Florida-Main Campus	7778	1786	22.96%
University of Southern California	19144	6060	31.65%
University of Utah	11114	2954	26.58%
University of Virginia-Main Campus	10169	2630	25.86%
University of Washington-Seattle Campus	21755	9665	44.43%
University of Wisconsin-Madison	21154	7478	35.35%
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	4992	1204	24.12%
Vanderbilt University	24982	8065	32.28%
Virginia Commonwealth University	7511	897	11.94%
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University	10275	1880	18.30%
Washington State University	7371	1730	23.47%
Washington University in St Louis	13964	2924	20.94%
Wayne State University	7782	2627	33.76%
West Virginia University	8373	1647	19.67%
Yale University	15789	2221	14.07%
<b>Average</b>			<b>24.78%</b>

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2018).

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the national data system for universities in the U.S., identifies eight classifications of employees: 1) executive, administrative, and managerial, 2) faculty (instructional/research/public service), 3) instruction/research assistants, 4) other professionals (support/service), 5) technical staff and paraprofessionals, 6) clerical and secretarial staff, 7) skilled crafts persons, and 8) service/maintenance. Other professionals (support/service) are defined as “staff employed for the primary purpose of performing academic support, student service, and institutional support, whose assignments would require either a baccalaureate degree or higher or experience of such kind and amount as to provide a comparable background.” (INTEGRATED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION DATA SYSTEM, 2015). These jobs include computer software engineers, counselors, academic support specialists, business operations specialists, human resources,

convention planners, financial analysts, database administrators, health educators, directors, librarians, therapists, and registered nurses, among many other job titles.

Lee, Somers and Fry (2016) investigated the duties of other professionals at a research university (for purposes of the study called Entrepreneurial Research University or ERU) in the U.S. They surveyed 1,036 non-faculty professionals to determine their involvement in three areas of core faculty work: research, teaching, and public service. This included faculty-like work such as publishing in peer-reviewed journals, applying for grants, designing curricula, sitting on committees, and collaborating with industry. Of the 759 respondents, 78% participated in at least one of the three elements of faculty work. Forty percent reported involvement in teaching, 40% in research, and 47% in public service. The majority of other professionals who participated in teaching or public service as part of their employment said that these duties accounted for less than 25% of their time. Other professionals who participated in research reported this being either less than 25% or more than 80% of their job duties.

The study found that a large number of professionals at ERU were directly participating in the production of research, teaching, and/or public service. Their duties were less supportive or administrative and more aligned with faculty-like work, particularly with research and public service. These results described the duties and roles of the fast growing job category of other professionals at research universities. To meet the demands of academic capitalism and the morphing mission of universities, other professionals are recruited to supplement the core missions of the university through faculty-like job duties, replacing full-time tenured faculty.

The ultimate irony of the Lee, Somers, and Fry (2016) research is that it demonstrates the destructive effect of academic capitalism on the elite R-1 institutions. Since R-1s are the vaunted model on which various world-wide rankings are founded, other types of universities are forced to adapt market-like behaviors in the wild hope of reaching the top of the rankings. On the other hand, these non-R1 institutions have generally fewer resources, missions that focus on teaching and public service, and a different mix of students. While marketization harms the academic and public service spirit of R-1 universities, it can overextend or bankrupt other types of institutions.

## 4 APPLICATION TO LATIN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

From the data presented in this article, it is clear that the expansion and internationalization of higher education in the U.S. are accompanied by marketization of the academy. Internal and external forces have pushed Latin American universities, regardless of their mission, toward marketization as well. At private universities and many public universities, these students pay tuition and take out student loans to pay educational costs. In order to propel Latin American universities to the top of the world rankings, additional funds are needed regularly to modernize facilities, purchase new technologies, and hire “superstar” faculty members. This “academic arms race” to climb the ladder of international rankings is costly and has high stakes for Latin American universities, often resulting in choices that only satisfy the “neoliberal” ranking metrics instead of other domestic or regional development priorities (ORDORIKA; LLOYD, 2015, p. 387). Universities that fall short in the international rankings, regardless of their mission or metrics, are viewed critically by governments, the public and the media. Thus, university/industry partnerships, technology/patent transfers, and government/NGO grants and contracts, and other means of bringing in new revenue are required. When accompanied by a corresponding decrease in funding for instruction, universities must hire itinerant faculty members and charge tuition to meet the full cost of instruction.

This academic capitalism by accretion and subtraction is prevalent in higher education in the U.S. However, the implications are different for institutions in Latin America. Universities in both regions face similar challenges: decreasing funding, mission creep, and the pressure to compete internationally with the top research universities (BERNASCONI, 2008). However, while there are exceptions, in general Latin American universities do not have the kind of university-industry partnership opportunities that abound in the U.S. (BERNASCONI, 2008).

Much like their North American counterparts, universities in Latin America were founded to serve as a public good through a commitment to study and solve social, economic and political problems. With this goal, the typical characteristics of the Latin American public university in the 1960s and 1970s were no tuition charges, self-governance through democratic proceedings involving faculty, students, alumni, and staff, full state funding for university operations, autonomy of university governance and academic freedom from political powers (BERNASCONI, 2008, p.

33). This autonomy from politics allowed public universities to play a central role in “transforming society” as agents of social change.

The Latin American university model changed from the 1970s through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. External factors such as military dictatorships, economic crises, and neoliberal politics threatened the university’s place in society as the autonomous, publicly funded, critical social conscience. During that time, Latin America moved from an elite access model (up to 15% of 18-22 year-olds enrolled in higher education), to the massification stage (up to 35%) or a universal access stage (more than 35%) (AROCENA; SUTZ, 2005). The rapidity of the enrollment expansion placed a burden on institutions to increase programming and financially support a greater number of students. The expansion led to a deterioration of the quality of programs as well as a diversification of the kinds of programs and institutions (BERNASCONI, 2008). The growth of enrollment, expansion of extant institutions, and the creation of new institutions required increased state financial support, which, particularly in the middle of the inflation and political unrest of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, was not readily available. Out of necessity and with the encouragement of organizations like the World Bank, many Latin American universities initiated tuition charges for public university students, moving away from the traditional model of no tuition (BERNASCONI, 2008).

Globalization and international rankings put pressures on Latin American universities to adopt more capitalistic practices to increase their rankings. One of the challenges with the existing university ranking systems is that they are based on a narrow set of criteria that reinforce an Anglo-Saxon model of higher education above other alternatives (ORDORIKA; LLOYD, 2015). The traditionally free, public higher education model focused primarily on domestic economic and social development issues is not valued in a rankings formula that privilege research output and academic reputation (ORDORIKA; LLOYD, 2015).

Rankings have become an important part of higher education as universities use them to demonstrate their value and to influence potential students and their parents. An alternative to changing the traditional, free higher education system is to create new criteria for the rankings calculus. For instance, the Comparative Study of Mexican Universities (produced by the National Autonomous University of Mexico) provides information on 3,000 institutions through an interactive database, but deliberately does not assign institutional rankings (ORDORIKA; LLOYD, 2015).

Dias and Serafim (2015, p. 335) identified three factors that affected Brazilian public universities since the 1990s: academic capitalism, innovation, and research productivity. These are reflected in the “fourth mission of the university”, model 2 knowledge production, entrepreneurialism, obsession with rankings and the mercantilization of knowledge. Based on what they label the “neoliberal fable” of Reagan and Thatcher, Dias and Serafim indicated that little critical discussion has transpired of how these activities have influenced the social role of the Latin American university. They concluded that Brazilian universities should critically debate the role of the public university and prevent these institutions from becoming more than diploma, publication and patent mills.

Leite (2010, p. 228) suggested universities have responded to trends and mandates from the Global North by adopting the Guaraní tradition of anthropophagy:

Instead of copying foreign ideas there is a tendency to create new ones and re-elaborate them with an anticipatory view and an accent of Global South localism. A critical mass and part of the political class adopts the neo-liberal [educational] policy initially, and then immediately afterwards it commits anthropophagy – it digests what it finds useful, regurgitates what does not concern it, and absorbs what will do some good.

The alternative of becoming caught up in the academic arms race for higher rankings through increased entrepreneurial activities can result in “underdeveloped universities” that shun their mission to provide a public good (RHOADES et al., 2004, p. 326). Instead of emulating academic capitalism, Rhoades and colleagues suggested an alternative strategy where universities might find success by emphasizing their strengths. They present the example of the largest private university in Mexico, the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), to demonstrate how a university has incorporated aspects of a western model with the traditional public service mission of Latin American universities. ITESM focuses on professional degrees and undergraduate education. It narrowed its mission by purposefully limiting involvement in research and doctoral programs. The anthropophagic strategy allows ITESM to maintain commitment to the community while meeting the standards for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Brazilian higher education experienced an increase in academic capitalism in the 1990s with the increase of private for-profit institutions. These for-profit institutions were designed for workforce and technical training, moving higher

education in Brazil towards a “knowledge factory” model centered on training “consumers” and providing an educational product (MARTINS, 2008, p. 736).

In contrast to the traditional free, public institutions dedicated to humanistic values and the diffusion of knowledge and academic research, these newer for-profit institutions provided professionalization and training for the growing technology industry in Brazil. The employment crisis of the 1990s placed additional pressure on higher education to produce graduates with skills for the workforce, reinforcing a model of academic capitalism in universities (MARTINS, 2008). The movement of higher education in Brazil towards academic capitalism should be met with caution (MARTINS, 2008), since such a transition results in a slow corrosion of the cultural role of universities in Brazil to serve the public good and the opportunities for students to obtain degrees at little to no cost.

McCowan (2017) described Brazilian higher education as having a high degree of classification, offering few interdisciplinary programs, and relying on the pedagogical strategy of lecture-based courses. These characteristics encourage the unbundling of services into smaller, more cost effective units. Some universities award “badges” for each unit that can be “stacked” to make certificates or a degree. This makes the educational “product” more accessible, attractive professionally, and affordable for employed adults who seek a degree to enhance their career prospects. Unbundling can range from outsourcing of services (such as janitorial, printing, parking, grading papers) to cut costs to developing online lectures by a superstar faculty member which are integrated into a course taught by an inexpensive graduate student in an effort to increase revenues. McCowan noted three threats of unbundling: the loss of connections between teaching and research, the undermining of education as a public good and issues with extended basic research projects with no quick financial return in terms of a patent.

Brazilian institutions can respond to the impending threats of academic capitalism in several ways. First, the strong traditions of academic autonomy, self-governance, and academic freedom should be maintained. This is in contrast to the erosion of self-governance and growth of intrusive management in the U.S. (BOWEN; TOBIN, 2015). Second, federal universities implemented changes to salary and retirement benefits that could discourage new Ph.D.s from pursuing an academic career; those prerequisites should be restored. Third, industry-university partnerships should be collaborative, in contrast with the power differential that



favors corporations in U.S. partnerships. Finally, faculty members and institutions should resist efforts designed to “free” faculty members from less productive student advising and teaching to focus on much more aggressive grant writing, fundraising, research and outreach activities.

## **5 CONCLUSION: THE REAL IMPACT OF ACADEMIC CAPITALISM**

To conclude this article, we briefly discuss the academic arms race through the use of academic capitalism. The influences are both institutional and individual.

All higher education institutions do not have the same mission or context. Ordorika and Lloyd (2015) have likened the international rankings of universities to a “Harvard-ometer”. Ironically, for some universities the only similarity to Harvard is that both have students, faculty and administrators. To use the same criteria to compare Harvard with intercultural universities in Mexico, online universities that provide outreach to less populated areas in Latin America, indigenous institutions, the multilateral University of Lusophone Afro-Brazilian International Integration (UNILAB) and University of Latin American Integration (UNILA), and Zumbi dos Palmares University is unfair and an extreme exercise in isomorphism. Yet, this is exactly the effect of international rankings.

Lost in all of the discussion about research productivity and industry collaboration is the philosophy of higher education as a public good equally accessible for poor, middle-class and wealthy students alike. In the U.S., first-generation and low-income college students are often served by regional universities, community colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal (Indigenous) Colleges. These institutions provide an important and vital service to students who might be under-served at Research Universities. Further, the “value added” for these students can exceed that of the intellectual and pecuniary gains for students at many elite universities.

Academic capitalism likewise has a profound impact on the faculty. Gonzales, Martinez, and Ordu (2014) talk of the “striving university” and the resulting strain on faculty members. A striving university is “prestige-seeking,” reaching for increased prestige through fundraising, developing selective student admissions, recruiting and rewarding faculty members, making curricular changes,

reallocating resources to favor research and the development of a public relations program (“branding”) (GONZALES; MARTINEZ; ORDU, 2014, p. 1099). The singular goal of the striving university is to advance in the rankings and increase institutional prestige.

A striving university, however, has a much more limited budget than a Research University. The result is dramatically increased expectations for the faculty with little support and infrastructure. The faculty members interviewed by Gonzales and colleagues talked about “being all things to everyone” (GONZALEZ; MARTINEZ; ORDU, p. 1105). In the striving university, faculty are required to teach 40 students per class, advise students, research, publish, write grant applications, develop an international reputation and other activities intended to help boost the university’s rankings. With both new technologies and increased expectations, the faculty members have very fluid lines between their work life and family life: their challenge is to “outsmart time”. Further, the focus is on publishing in highly selective journals and doing research that would generate revenue in the form of grants, contracts and patents. The result is that the aspirations of the striving university have affected faculty life for the worse.

Faculty members at striving universities also report increased surveillance of their work outcomes, including the imposition of many measures with which they disagree. Their accountability is only calculated in narrow quantitative terms, such as number of publications, impact factor for publications, grant dollars generated and the amount of revenue generated per faculty member. Some faculty members report the expected revenue generation is five times their annual salary per annum.

The unstoppable forces of decreased funding and increased expectations have required universities around the globe to turn to the philosophy of academic capitalism to produce a cheaper “educational product” and increase faculty research, fundraising and business/industry activities. In the United States, all of these expectations have created a dysfunctional climate for faculty members. However, Brazil, with its dual approach to higher education may have a different trajectory. The high-quality, free, federal university system stands poised to resist whole-scale academic capitalism. On the other hand, the private sector, with its monthly tuition charges that approach the national minimum wage, is very susceptible to putting profits over people. We recommended that all Brazilian faculty can commit anthropophagy, resisting the harmful parts of academic capitalism while modifying positive elements.

This continues the strong tradition of autonomous public universities that serve the needs of students and community.

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