

# The Urban Research University in American Higher Education: Portland State University as a Model

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*Abstract* Over the last fifty years American higher education has expanded both in the number of students that it serves and in the number and different types of institutions that form higher education. Portland State University was founded fifty years ago and its growth is an instructive example of this development. This article will examine the history and present mission of Portland State against the national scene. Today Portland State identifies itself as an Urban Research University with a distinct mission to provide access to higher education for its region, to form close ties to its community through educational, research, and service activities developed in conjunction with the business, industrial, educational, and public agencies in the metropolitan region. This mission derives from both the urban location of the institution and from a national agenda of like universities who see the future needs of American society in terms of the urban nature of our society. This mission is reflected in its academic programs, its curricula, its research priorities, and its outreach to the community. Universities such as Portland State are confronting the opportunities and challenges of directing its educational and research resources to support its community and to provide continuing support for those traditional aspects of the university mission that have made American Higher Education successful.

## THE URBAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Over its more than two hundred year history, American Higher Education has produced different types of institutions, both public and private. This typology includes liberal arts colleges, research universities, land-grant universities, two year community colleges, and metropolitan and urban universities. Each type shares certain common features but each has had different historical origins and purports to have distinct academic missions. Another feature, however, of this historical development has been the dominance of two of the types, the liberal arts college and the research university, and as a result, these become the ideal against which all institutions are assessed. Within this overall history, the development of the metropolitan and urban universities can be seen as one of the most complex. While in some instances institutions of this type predate 1940, it has been in the post World War II period that their role has become increasingly important. At the core of the mission of this institutional type, we find the enactment of a concept articulated as early as 1787 in the Northwest Ordinance that all citizens should have the right to access higher education and the establishment and growth of institutions in our centers of population in the last half century represents the American commitment to this concept of citizen access.

After World War II, the demand to access higher education by more and more citizens was intensified as young men, especially veterans supported by federal educational benefits (the GI Bill), enrolled in universities in unprecedented numbers. This began a period of rapid growth in the number and size of higher education institutions throughout the country, a growth that was further accelerated during the sixties by a commitment to educate previously underserved student populations. These new students, representing a broader cross-section of American society -- women, minorities, the poor -- became inadvertent agents of educational change. This ever-widening student population together with increased federal support for research gave birth to the contemporary American university.

Throughout the postwar period states sought to meet the demand for access to higher education by creating new types of institutions to serve major population centers. In addition to the rise of community colleges, states built new institutions or absorbed existing four year institutions into ever larger and more complex systems. Prior to the end of World War II, the tendency had been to build colleges and universities as residential campuses away from population centers; now the states engaged in creating universities to serve nonresidential, often place-bound urban and suburban students. These newer institutions, especially community college systems and metropolitan/urban universities,

have become a significant but not fully recognized force in higher education (Elliott 1994).

In a recent study, four originating processes were identified to account for the majority of metropolitan and urban universities:

- . Institutions established as part of a central city prior to World War II, in some cases as early as the eighteenth century but the majority in the twentieth century.
- . Institutions created as wholly independent universities after World War II for the specific purpose of serving the needs of a population center.
- . Institutions established as branches or extensions of major university systems in order to serve urban populations.
- . Institutions originally created for a more specialized purpose, frequently teachers colleges, that were expanded to comprehensive universities to serve a population center

(Hathaway 1995)

The development of Portland State University exemplifies the third type of institutional origin. Founded in 1946 as an extension center of the Oregon State System of Higher Education, the institution offered only the first two years of college study for returning veterans. In 1955 it became a four-year college granting the baccalaureate degree. By this time it had been relocated to its present location at the edge of the city center. The first graduate professional program, in Social Work, began in 1966, and in 1968 and 1969 the first doctoral programs were offered and the college was granted University status. Currently Portland State is an Urban Research University with an enrollment of 14,785 students, approximately 4,000 of whom are pursuing graduate or post-baccalaureate studies. Over its fifty-year history, Portland State has exemplified the development of public urban institutions, fulfilling the goal of offering access to older, more diverse students, many of whom are employed and need access to educational opportunities that are available in the metropolitan area where they live and work. As the older, more traditional universities faced at one time, PSU faces the difficulties of being seen as an unwanted competitor for the state resources available to support higher education.

Like other metropolitan/urban universities, Portland State is characterized by a high enrollment of commuter and minority students, but its most distinguishing quality is an educational philosophy of social interaction which fosters symbiotic relationships between the university and its metropolitan area. In some institutions, this interaction is located primarily in a few well-defined units, such as a School of Edu-

cation or a Center for Urban Studies; however, at Portland State and similar institutions, the university mission includes a commitment to community interaction that permeates much of the institution. The PSU mission, for example, calls for applying both instructional and research resources to the betterment of the metropolitan community.

As American higher education faces new challenges in the 1990's, the emergence of the urban university is beginning to fulfill its role as a powerful catalyst for change. The large-scale development of public urban universities that began after World War II was viewed by many as temporary; in most cases, urban institutions were not expected to survive once the immediate objective of providing education to returning veterans was met. This perception was demonstrated in Oregon by several attempts of the state system of higher education to close the extension center it had started in Portland and subsequently to turn the emergent college over to one of the more established and traditional state universities. However, what was thought to be a temporary aberration (both nationally and in Oregon) increasingly became the norm for the increased numbers of students seeking access to higher education. The growing importance of cities, the postwar baby boom, and the social fervor of the 1960's and 1970's focused increased attention on the potential of urban universities to enhance the social and economic development of the metropolitan areas in which they were located.

From their various beginnings, American urban and metropolitan universities have struggled to gain legitimacy and credibility in a culture of higher education that is rooted in the established and more traditional institutions. These older institutions maintained the accepted academic norms which the newer institutions were expected to emulate. Faculty culture has its own long and fascinating history, but in trying to understand its present situation let us sketch out a model, for purposes of argument, of the successfully acculturated faculty career and then let us contextualize it. The model dominant in the present situation, as Eugene Rice has argued, is a professional self-perception which has been cultivated in conjunction with the expansion of higher education in the United States, especially with the increase of federal support for research and with the increase in graduate education. Rice identifies seven characteristics of this professorial self-perception: 1) Research and publication are the central professional endeavors and the focus of professional academic life; 2) Professional quality is maintained through peer review and professional autonomy; 3) Knowledge is pursued for its own sake; 4) Knowledge is best organized and pursued according to academic disciplines housed in discipline-based departments; 5) Reputations are established through national and international professional associations; 6) The distinctive task of the academic professional

is the pursuit of cognitive truth or (as some would prefer it) cognitive rationality; 7) Professional rewards and mobility properly accrue to those who persistently accentuate their specializations (Rice 1996).

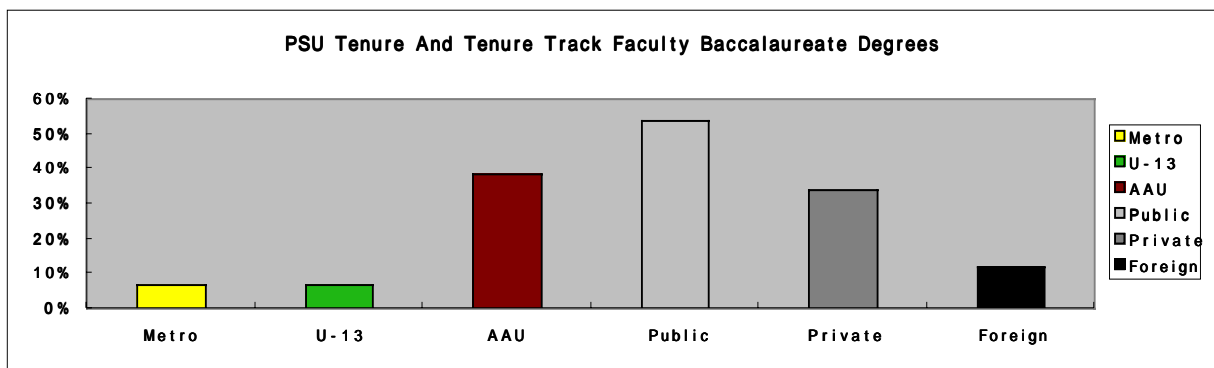
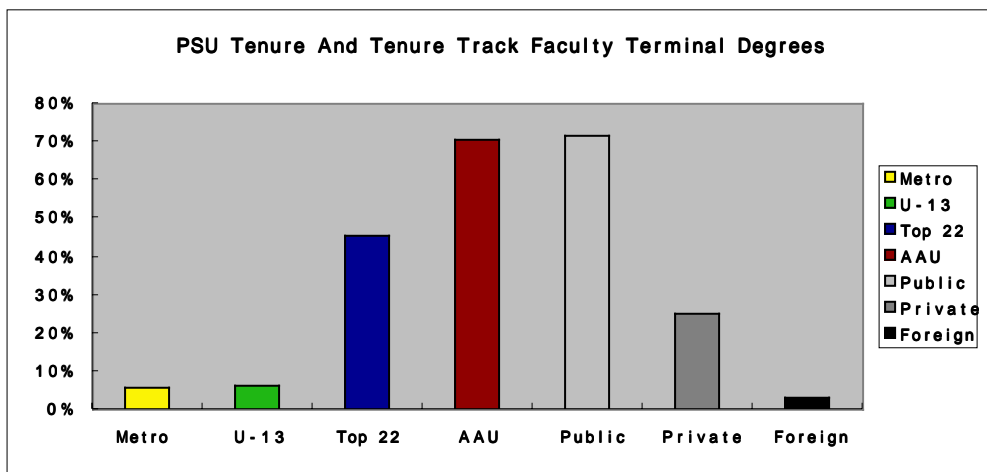
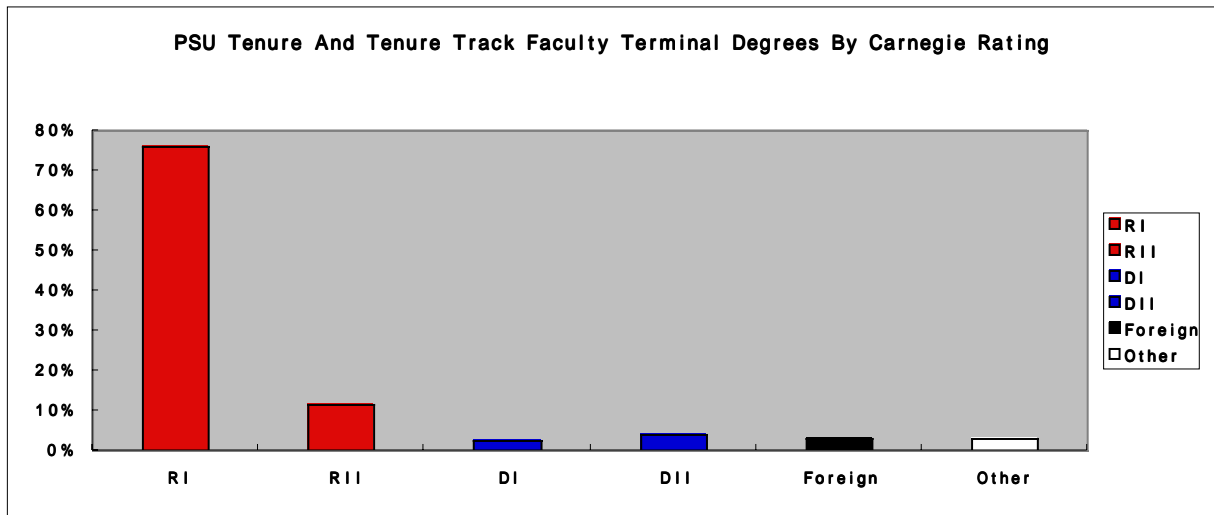
While not all faculty subscribe to all of these characteristics with equal fervor, they still provide a collective self-image. This is the case even though most individual faculty careers do not fit this description. In fact, there is ample evidence that most academics are involved primarily in undergraduate teaching and that continued specialized research and publication are not the focus of most academic careers. In spite of this disjunction between the professional ideal and the practiced reality, the ideal remains the dominant image of what a successful academic career ought to look like. More particularly, it has shaped the goals faculty expect academic institutions should allow them to fulfill and it remains a significant source of resistance to change. The historical development of higher education has been driven in no small extent by this desire for such arenas of professional practice, and in this way institutional history has continued to reinforce the validity of the ideal.

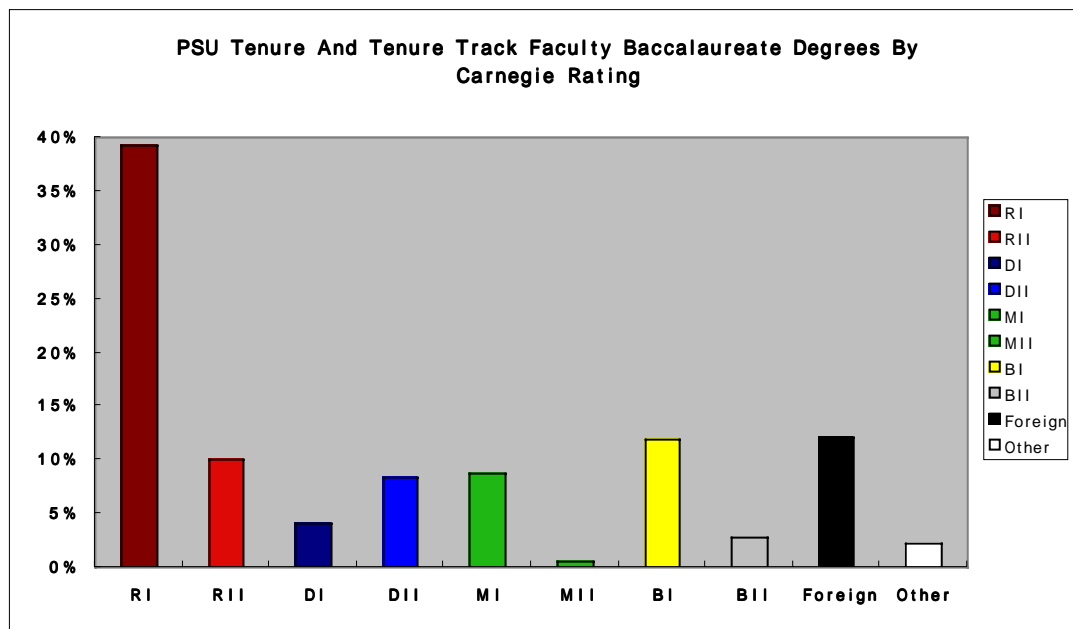
We know that since the second world war the ideal of the Research University has come to be the goal of institutional development, particularly for public universities. We have seen the emergence of the Carnegie rankings that, while not supposedly meant to be evaluative and hierarchical, in fact have become so, with the Research I university as the omega point of a successful evolution. We know that most of the research funds from the federal government have gone to twenty to twenty-five institutions, and that while there has been some marginal movement in and out of that recipient category, by and large the set of institutions remains the same. We know also that there has been a geographical concentration of that research funding: in spite of the ongoing debates in the National Science Foundation about institutional or geographic expansion, the realized overall expansion has been only slight. We know (in turning to the national associations) that the American Association of Universities, with its closely protected quota of sixty members, identifies the elite research institutions both public and private. Finally we continue to exist under the frightful maritime metaphor of flagship universities. Thus the various national rankings

reinforce a complex interactive system that either places every institution as a stage in the evolution of the species, or assigns us a place in a virtual armada, hence instilling in us institutional desires to evolve further or get a bigger rigging. But like the reality of individual faculty lives, the reality of institutions is such that we cannot all become Research I universities. Increasingly we hear from voices, both within and without, that institutions should define specific missions, that undergraduate education should be our primary focus, that duplication is unnecessary. Ironically, and as we know only too well in Oregon, this is a serious dilemma because the very same voices, sometimes from business and industry, sometimes from our own governing board, will in the next statement discuss the need for a Research University in the metropolitan area. Thus, like the pathology of individual desire unfulfilled, we live an institutional pathology of desire unrealized.

Institutions like Portland State are inescapably spaces of desire and crisis. Almost all of the earlier institutional forms are embedded in us: the liberal arts college, the city universities of the early twentieth century created to provide access and mobility to increasing immigrant populations, the research university, and even elements of the land-grant institutions with their outreach to the larger community. Institutions like ours have been in the midst of constant growth and crisis, searching for clear identity. But a clear identity would require a close alignment of faculty desire and institutional mission. The pathologies are impediments to achieving clear institutional or individual identities.

The model of the academic career and the mission of the research university have come to us from the German university of the nineteenth century, conceived by von Humboldt and Schleiermacher, hardened in the fire of Max Weber's concept of the academic profession as committed solely to the pursuit of value-free knowledge. As academics we entered into the structure, values, and ideals of an existing profession and we took up careers in institutions already situated in the developing history of American Higher Education. We therefore were socialized into a structure of professional and institutional desire. Consider briefly the profile of Portland State's instructional and research faculty.





As the first graph indicates, almost 80% of Portland State instructional and research faculty hold their highest degrees from Research I (denoted RI in the graphs) universities and the next 10% from Research II (RII) universities. In a further refinement of those categories, the graph indicates that 70% of this faculty cohort hold their highest degree from an American Association of Universities (AAU) university, and 45% hold degrees from the top twenty-two universities (Top 22) who have been the recipients over the last ten years of a third of all federal research funds. Note also that within our own faculty less than 10% hold their highest degree from universities that designate themselves urban (U-13) or metropolitan (Metro) and it should be pointed out that there are Research I and II universities in these latter categories. We should not be surprised by this profile. (DI & DII, MI & MII, BI & BII designate the Carnegie categories of doctoral, masters and baccalaureate degree granting institutions, respectively.) On a national level 102 universities produce 80% annually of all doctoral degrees granted. These few universities operate, then, as a funnel through which the vast majority of faculty members in America's 3,688 diverse colleges and universities must pass. This graduate training is the fundamental acculturation process for the profession. We clearly have encoded our concept of excellence around the initial hiring of faculty, and have therefore identified a certain number and type of institutions as the preferred training ground. It is in these preferred institutions that the ideal of the academic career and of the research mission has been concretized. It is also clear that the combination of the professional ideal and the research mission has been one of the great cultural and intellectual achievements of our national

history and has contributed to extraordinary achievements in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. It is very difficult for us, having been acculturated to this goal to have it questioned or be told that change is upon us. As Eugene Rice points out:

As faculty members look toward what is at best an ambiguous future, they cling tenaciously to that established professional image internalized during graduate school days. Rather than looking for new ways of dealing with the difficult problems confronting higher education or responding to opportunities for renewal or new career options, they accentuate and narrow further the older, established career path. In times of stress they choose the familiar. (Rice 1996)

While the model of graduate education developed in the Research University is the critical beginning of socialization into our profession, we should also have a sense of how as a faculty we experienced the first level of higher education. If we look at types of institutions that produced our tenured and tenure-track faculty, we find a greater diversity than at the graduate level, but still almost half received their undergraduate degrees from Research Universities. What I think is more significant arises when we inspect the sources of our undergraduate experiences in relation to the institutions like Portland State who identify as either metropolitan or urban. As a faculty we have had a very different experience of both undergraduate and graduate education from the students who are utilizing our curricula and our academic structures for their education. It is clear that, in both our

undergraduate and graduate experience, Portland State's instructional and research faculty did not in significant numbers go to institutions like Portland State but rather to the older traditional universities. This faculty culture and the new challenges that urban institutions must meet creates a complicated situation when many faculty and administrators in urban universities subscribe to the same values of the older universities and hold the traditional university model as what the urban university should become as it grows older and matures.

Developments that have occurred during the last ten years, however, suggest that as urban universities gain self-confidence and external acceptance of their mission, they can seek their own identities and move away from the traditional model. In 1980, Congress adopted the concept of the Urban Grant University and followed in 1990 with Title XI of the Higher Education Act. The latter legislation ascribed certain characteristics to urban universities: they are located in urban areas; they draw a substantial portion of their students from urban and surrounding areas; and they carry out programs to make postsecondary education opportunities more accessible to residents of their urban regions. Portland State has been designated an Urban Grant University and has received funding under Title XI for programs to assist at-risk children and to improve science education in K-12. Also in 1990 the presidents of forty-nine urban and metropolitan institutions, including Portland State, signed a Declaration of Metropolitan Universities that expand on the specific characteristics of these institutions. During this same period the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges formed the Urban Affairs Division and established the Urban 13 Schools (now expanded to twenty-four) as a consortium to promote the mission of Urban Universities.

These national developments have assisted urban schools to define and to gain confidence in their mission. To meet the challenges, urban universities must reexamine the implications of public acceptance of their existence as a newer different but high quality component of the higher education establishment. As Nohad Toulan, Dean of the College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University has stated:

Changing demographics and high rates of obsolescence in human capital and resources dispels the notion that place-bound students are of lower quality or that their needs are mostly remedial. This is particularly true at the graduate level which, contrary to past beliefs, is likely to be the fastest growing component of the urban university's student body. Parallel changes in technology and economic and social institutions call for an increase in the volume and quality of research that contribute to local welfare.

Indeed, no one can dictate or predetermine the type of research that faculty are willing or capable of conducting but it is a fact that faculty respond to challenge and opportunity. The urban university, therefore, is where society should support and demand high quality applied research but it can not discourage basic research. In other words, the urban university can not be held to a narrowly defined mission and a constrained level of program offerings with out diminishing its contribution. (Toulan 1990)

Responding to the issues of modern society calls for research both basic and applied that can assist society in addressing the issues of the environment, health care, educational reform, effective business, industry, and governmental organization, the new technologies, the social concerns of the elderly, children-at-risk, families, and the pressures of urban life. An essential part of the mission of the urban university requires that research and outreach activities be brought into correspondence with these societal issues. To fully realize the mission, urban universities must also continue to provide quality education in the traditional arts and sciences, while developing those pre-professional and professional graduate programs that provide the human resources for the urban society of the twenty-first century. Finally, to actualize the urban university concept, the heart of the institution must be addressed and the curriculum by which students pursue their educational and career goals must also reflect the interaction between the institution and the community.

The articles that follow discuss the approach that Portland State University has taken in formulating and implementing its role as an Urban University. The focus on the curricular dimension, particularly the revised general education curriculum we have implemented, is an essential way that we have brought the urban mission into the core educational experience.

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要 約

アメリカの高等教育における都市型研究大学  
ポートランド州立大学をモデルとして

これまで50年にわたり、アメリカの高等教育は教育する学生の数と高等教育を形成する施設の数およびその種類を増大させてきた。ポートランド州立大学は50年前に設立され、その発展はアメリカ高等教育の発展の指導的な例になっている。この論文はその歴史を検討し、国内状況に応じたポートランド州立大学の果たす役割について述べていく。今日ではポートランド州立大学は、自分自身を住民が地域内で高等教育を受けられるようにするための大学と規定しており、教育、研究、大都市における公立機関、商工業団体、教育機関を通して地域社会と密着した関係を持つ都市型研究大学(Urban Research University)であると認識している。この使命は、大学が都市部にあることと、米国社会の都市の特徴を考慮して将来何が必要であるかを大学が推測すべきであるとした米国におけるの議論に由来する。この役割は、大学のプログラム、カリキュラム、研究における優先順位、地域コミュニティへの援助に反映されている。ポートランド州立大学のような大学は、コミュニティを援助しアメリカの高等教育を成功させてきた伝統を持つ大学の使命を継続的に支援するために、教育・研究資源を監督する機会を持ち、それに挑戦し続けている。

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