

Lecture: The Cost of Global University Rankings and Envisioning an Alternative: The New Flagship University Model

Date: Wednesday, December 4th, 12 noon

Place: Club Room at WU's Library and Learning Center

Speaker: Prof. John Aubrey Douglass, Senior Research Fellow and Research Professor - Public Policy and Higher Education Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California – Berkeley, USA

Abstract

In the book, *The New Flagship University: Changing the Paradigm from Global Rankings to National Relevancy* (Palgrave Macmillan), I attempt to provide an expansive vision for leading national universities as an alternative narrative to global rankings and the advocacy for World Class Universities (WCU) that dominate the attention of many universities, as well as government ministries. It is not that current rankings, and their offspring the WCU paradigm, are not useful and informative. But they represent a very narrow band of what it means to be a major university within a region, within a nation, and poses real costs for universities. Further, ranking and WCU advocates do not provide much guidance, or knowledge, on what organizational behaviors and methods can lead to greater productivity in research, teaching, and public service to best meet the needs of the societies they serve. I will briefly discuss the impact of the ranking/WCU model, and then the New Flagship model, advocating pathways for universities to shape their missions and academic cultures, and to pursue organizational features intended to expand their relevancy in the societies that give them life and purpose. In this quest, international standards of excellence focused largely on research productivity are not ignored, but are framed as only one goal towards supporting a university's productivity and larger social purpose—not as an end unto itself. The New Flagship model includes four Policy Realms of policies and practices. Each relates to the institution's external responsibilities and internal operations, and draws on examples of innovative activities in leading national universities from throughout the world. Within the context of a larger national higher education system, the idea is that Flagship institutions have a set of goals, shared good practices, logics, and the resources to pursue them. The model is being used by a number of universities for strategic planning purposes and the author seeks thoughts on its value and ways it could be promoted.

About the speaker

John Aubrey Douglass is Senior Research Fellow and Research Professor - Public Policy and Higher Education at the Center for Studies in Higher Education (CSHE) at the University of California - Berkeley. His research focuses on globalization and higher education, the role of universities in economic development and socioeconomic mobility, and the history of higher education. He is the author of *Neo-Nationalism and Universities* (forthcoming Johns Hopkins University Press), *The New Flagship University: Changing the Paradigm from Global Ranking*

to National Relevancy (Palgrave Macmillan 2016) and the follow-up book Envisioning the Asian New Flagship University (Berkeley Public Policy Press, 2017), The Conditions for Admissions (Stanford Press 2007), The California Idea and American Higher Education (Stanford University Press, 2000, and with Jud King and Irwin Feller (ed.) Globalization's Muse: Universities and Higher Education Systems in a Changing World (Public Policy Press, 2009). Recent reports include Approaching a Tipping Point?: A History and Prospectus on Funding for the University of California and The Role of Universities in Economic Competitiveness in California. Among the research projects he founded is the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium – a group of major research universities in the US and internationally that conduct survey research on undergraduates and graduate students and with member universities in China, Japan, Brazil, South Africa, the Netherlands, Germany, the UK and Russia. He is also the editor of the Center's Research and Occasional Paper Series (ROPS), sits on the editorial board of international higher education journals in the UK, China, and Russia, and serves on the international advisory boards of a number of higher education institutes.

He has been a Visiting Researcher at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), a Visiting Professor at Amsterdam University College (a unit of the University of Amsterdam and Vrije University of Amsterdam), at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Brazil), at Sciences Po (Paris), and a Visiting Research Fellow at the Oxford Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (OxCHEPS). For more information on his research and publications, see his [CSHE webpage](#).