

professor or administrator. One hopes, and expects, that it will find its way into the hands of many.

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*The Indispensable University: Higher Education, Economic Development, and the Knowledge Economy*, by Eugene P. Trani and Robert D. Holsworth. American Council on Education/Rowman & Littlefield, 2010. 281 pp. \$49.95 (cloth). ISBN 978-1-60709-079-3

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Professors Eugene Trani and Robert Holsworth, both of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia,<sup>1</sup> have produced in this book an interesting, insightful, and notably wide ranging discussion of what they see as a key aspect of modern higher education—its role in community and economic development. They offer this perspective largely from the vantage point of institutional leadership but, given that, the span is wide. There are chapters on “The Emergence of Urban Universities,” “The Reinvention of the Land-Grant University,” “Community College—A Uniquely American Invention,” “British and Irish Higher Education: Ancient but thoroughly Modern,” “Middle Eastern Higher Education: Two Oases in the Desert,” and “Higher Education in Developing Countries: The BRIC Nations,” in addition to introductory (two) and concluding chapters. The two initial chapters set the main theme firmly as both include “economic and community development” in their titles. These authors clearly see the engaged academic institution—both economically and socially engaged that is—as the emergent dominant academic institutional form around the globe.

The authors derive much of their analysis from their experiences at Virginia Commonwealth during Trani’s long presidency, from 1990 to 2009, including experiences with VCU’s institutional partners abroad. Prior to Trani’s presidency, according to the authors, the school’s relations with its immediate neighbors were distant and strained at best while Richmond itself was somewhat depressed and struggling economically. Trani led and Holsworth evidently played an important role in a policy of institutional civic engagement that included the de-

velopment of service learning programs and consulting relationships to engage with the community; collaborative decision-making with campus neighbors on projects not only to expand the campus but also to improve the neighborhood in ways it desired; involvement in broader regional strategizing and decision-making; and development of academic and applied research programs linked to the local economy. Since VCU has a medical school, the institution had some special opportunities to visibly aid local populations, not only in treating their health problems but also training and employing them in rewarding jobs. Of course, the university worked to make all aware of its broad strategy of engagement. The authors note how this makes friends for the institution and creates incentives for legislative support.

Throughout the book the authors emphasize the constructive community partnerships that academic institutions can build by virtue not just of the expertise and energy they can offer (e.g., from students) but as well from their roles as large-scale employer, purchaser of goods and services (“buy local” where possible), and real estate developer. They offer numerous examples not limited to VCU, as the above chapter titles suggest. For example, the chapter on the urban university offers a case study of the University of Pennsylvania’s widely admired programs to become a part of its surrounding community, which was formerly badly deteriorating, rather than simply exist next to it. Penn has pioneered service learning and community involvement programs as well as community partnerships for urban revitalization (pp. 48–55) while also partnering with the city and state on research-based efforts and technology transfer as an integral part of regional and state economic development strategies (Geiger, 2010). This chapter also provides a nice case study of the University of Southern California’s efforts under President Steven Sample, whose tenure closely paralleled Trani’s, to help rebuild its surrounding community and engage with it. Like Penn, USC was faced with serious strategic problems in attracting faculty and students as its inner city surroundings declined and became unsafe. Similarly, the chapter on the reinvention of the land grant university emphasizes urban “experiment stations” in profiling Ohio State and the Universities of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and Wisconsin-Madison.

The chapter on community colleges uses Miami-Dade, Montgomery College in suburban Maryland, and the Maricopa Community Colleges in the Phoenix area to explain how two-year colleges also fit into state and local economic development strategies by virtue of their occupationally relevant training programs. These colleges also serve more broadly by providing access to a broad swath of educational opportunities for groups who too often miss out on educational opportunities after leaving formal schooling. In the contemporary economy, it is clearly critical to educate more fully a larger share of the population and community colleges are a primary vehicle for this. A better-educated population in turn aids local development prospects.

I found the chapters on the institutions abroad—in Britain and Ireland; Israel and Qatar; and Russia, India, and China—the most interesting, perhaps because I was less familiar with most of these cases, as I suspect many readers will be. In these chapters the authors emphasize the economic development dimension more than community development. The University of Cambridge, which recently edged out Harvard to lead one of the world university rankings, has spearheaded creation of a vibrant technology cluster in its environs, the “Silicon

Fen,” that rivals northern California’s Silicon Valley and the Research Triangle area of North Carolina. Israel has seen dramatic expansion of higher education as going hand in hand with its emphasis on a home-grown, cutting edge military technology industry and is seeking now to benefit more broadly from technology spillovers. Qatar, a very small but wealthy state, has looked beyond its resource-based current economy to emphasize higher education and research, in its case mostly imported from abroad, as the key to future prosperity in the global knowledge economy. The sections on Russia, India, and China also use institutional case studies to help illustrate general points about the modernization of higher education and, in these cases, the extant and potential tensions with prevailing political and cultural norms.

The limitations of this book should be clear from the above discussion. It is largely descriptive—though perceptively so in the main and not without theoretical and cultural context—and derived mostly from the authors’ experiences by virtue of their VCU roles, not from any discernible sampling strategy. The target audience is more institutional leaders and administrators, and perhaps to some extent sympathetic policy actors, than scholars. The book is not a technical or empirical treatise on the linkages between higher education and economic development. Faculty in graduate programs in higher education may find parts of the book useful to assign to students, though, because it offers perceptive ideas about modern institutional leadership and programming and may broaden their horizons.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Trani is University Distinguished Professor and President Emeritus. Holsworth was chair of political science, founding director of the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, and dean of humanities and social sciences.

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