HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

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Preface to the Special Issue

Comparative Perspectives on Higher Education Reform:
The Experiences of Portland State University and Hokkaido University

This special issue of the Journal of Higher Education and Lifelong Learning brings together two perspectives on higher education reform: one from Portland State University (in Portland, Oregon, USA), one from Hokkaido University (in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan). These two institutions have had very different histories and serve distinct institutional missions within higher education. We are very excited about the opportunity this special issue presents to collect and compare the perspectives on higher education reform held by scholars and educators from the two institutions. Before describing the contents of the special issue on higher educational reform in more detail, it may be helpful to provide a brief sketch of each institution.

Portland State University (PSU) was founded in 1946 as the Vanport Extension Center. The Center moved to downtown Portland in 1952. In 1955 it became Portland State College, a four-year, degree granting institution. Graduate programs were added in 1961, doctoral programs began in 1968, and the institution was given university status in 1969. Portland State University has grown rapidly over the years, and is now the largest university in the State of Oregon. Approximately 15,000 students are enrolled at PSU, including 4,200 graduate students. The academic units of PSU include the following schools and colleges: Liberal Arts and Sciences; Business Administration; Education; Engineering and Applied Science; Fine and Performing Arts; Social Work; Urban and Public Affairs; and Extended Studies. The University offers bachelor's degrees in 32 fields, master's degrees in 38 fields, and doctoral degrees in seven areas (Education, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Environmental Sciences and Resources, Public Administration and Policy, Social Work and Social Research, Systems Science, and Urban Studies and Planning). In addition to the 15,000 enrolled students, another 25,000 students are served each year in credit and non-credit courses offered through the School of Extended Studies.

The motto of PSU, "Let knowledge serve the city," embodies the distinctive mission of the institution. Portland State University is Oregon's urban university, seeking to respond to the special needs and interests of the greater Portland metropolitan area and surrounding region. Through a combination of teaching, research and service, PSU is committed to offering high quality graduate and undergraduate academic programs, extended studies, and public service.

Hokkaido University, founded in 1876 as Sapporo Agricultural College, was the first college in Japan to award bachelor's degrees. The college was originally modeled after an American agricultural college. Its introduction in Sapporo stimulated the settlement of Hokkaido island and the modernization of higher education in Japan. It later became part of the agricultural college of Tohuku Imperial University (based in Sendai) in 1907, and was re-established as Hokkaido Imperial University in 1918. It was renamed to Hokkaido University in 1947 and has steadily expanded as a national university since that time. It currently serves nearly 16,000 students, including approximately 4,400 graduate students. Academic programs awarding bachelor's, master's and/or doctoral degrees are offered by thirteen schools: Letters, Education, Law, Economics, Science, Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Fisheries Science, and Environmental Earth Science. As typical in Japan, medical/dental school programs are combined into single, six-year undergraduate programs awarding the M.D. or D.D.S. degree (without a bachelor's degree). Environmental Earth Science awards only graduate degrees; all other schools award both undergraduate and graduate degrees, most at both the master's and doctoral level.

As one of Japan's leading national universities, Hokkaido University's mission is to promote the modernization of Japan through research and education. The university is trying to transform itself into a "Graduate Research University," placing increased emphasis on graduate education and research activities.

Despite their distinct histories and missions, the two institutions in the sister cities of Portland and Sapporo have been cooperating closely for many years. Portland State University and Hokkaido University concluded an agreement in 1972 for academic and educational exchange and cooperation, the first of 57 such international agreements reached by Hokkaido University with 57 institutions from 15 countries. Each institution is recently undergoing major

transformations in response to changing needs in their societies and educational systems. At each institution, faculty from several disciplines are engaged in the design, support and implementation of various reforms. Centers have been started at each university to facilitate these ongoing changes. The similarities and differences in the transformations and reforms of the two universities have been noticed by educators and scholars on both sides of the Pacific. This special journal issue begins to explore some of the related reforms taking place at the two universities, including restructuring of general education, new admissions standards, collaboration between high school and university faculties, the expansion of education to serve special urban and regional needs and populations, and the changing roles of faculty and students in new models of teaching and learning.

This special issue includes 17 articles about these various topics in the reform of higher education, 7 written by authors at Portland State University and 10 by authors at Hokkaido University. The articles about Portland State University appear first, followed by articles about Hokkaido University. Several articles provide some background context about the history of the two institutions and the contexts of their reform efforts. The article by Michael Reardon and Jason Lohr (“The Urban Research University in American Higher Education: Portland State as a Model”) provides such background about Portland State and its ongoing transformation into a model urban research university. Similar perspective about the ongoing transformation of Hokkaido University into a model graduate research university is provided by Norihito Tambo (“Reformation of Hokkaido University: New Conceptions of a Graduate Research University”). Additional historical perspective and context about the reforms underway at Hokkaido University is given in the articles by Hiroshi Yoshida (“Reform of Education in Hokkaido University: Historical Perspective”) and by Masaaki Ogasawara (“Is General Education Necessary? A Brief Review of General Education in Japan with Special Reference to Hokkaido University”).

Several articles discuss the internal processes of change at the two universities which support external demands for institutional transformation. The aforementioned article by Tambo and the article by Charles White and Judith Ramaley (“Institutional Transformation as Scholarly Activity: The Experience of Portland State University”) provide such perspectives on the relationship between internal reforms and external demands for change. The changing roles of faculty and students in the educational process – and some strategies for supporting them – are considered in the articles by Sherwin Davidson (“Supporting Faculty in Educational Reform”), by Kazuhiro Abe and Kouich Terazawa (“From Teaching to Learning in Higher Education: Models of Student-Centered Small Group Learning in a Larger Class”), by Amy Driscoll, Joan Strouse and M. J. Longley (“Community-Based Teaching and Learning: Changing Roles for Faculty, Students and Community”), and by Paul Latiolais (“From Teaching to Learning - A Personal Account”).

Several of the articles address the reform of general education underway at the universities. The articles noted above by White and Ramaley and by Ogasawara deal primarily with general education reform; Etsuo Yoshino’s article (“Inter-Faculty Collaboration and General Education Reform: The Case of Hokkaido University”) also examines reform of general education. Other articles explore the experiences of these institutions in making reforms which respond to societal demands for serving adult learners in communities, workplaces and other new settings and contexts. Makoto Kimura and Hajime Kobayashi (“Community Reform and Lifelong Learning: The University Role”), Stephen Reder (“Lifelong Learning and Educational Reform”) and Teruhisa Machii and Hiromi Sasai (“The Recurrent Education System in Japanese Universities and Colleges”) consider various ways in which the institutions are changing or must change in order to provide these new and expanded forms of education.

Another group of articles examines reforms taking place in the university admissions process, including the crucial role of entrance examinations in Japan. Toshiyuki Hosokawa and Akira Onodera (“The University Entrance Examination and Physics Education”), Kiyoshi Hasebe (“University Entrance Examination and University-High School Collaboration Today and Tomorrow”) and Toshiyuki Nishimori (“University-High School Collaboration in Current Admissions”) each consider ways in which the university entrance examination system impacts education at the high school and university levels. Collaboration between university and high school faculty is essential for reforming the admissions process and smoothing the transitions for high school students in both Japan and the United States. The aforementioned articles by Nishimori and by Hasebe emphasize the important role which such collaboration plays in the overall educational reform process, as does Dalton Miller-Jones in his piece on how new proficiency standards for university entrance have stimulated the collaboration of high school and university faculties (“Proficiency-Based Admissions Standards: University-High School Collaboration”).

At the end of the issue is a bilingual glossary of terms appearing in the articles written by American authors. Some of the glossary entries are technical terms about higher education and educational reform that may be unfamiliar to Japanese readers. Other terms such as “lifelong learning” or “general education” may be familiar but have different meanings in the contexts of higher education in Japan and the United States. We hope the glossary will provide some guidance to Japanese readers.

Many individuals have contributed to the editorial and production processes for this special issue. We deeply appreciate their efforts and contributions. Although it is not possible to individually name everyone who has been involved, we would like to acknowledge the editorial assistance of the following individuals: Laura Casey, William Fischer, Candice Goucher, Barbara Holland, Devorah Lieberman, Judy Patton, Shelley Reece, Michael Toth and Anthony Wolk (Portland State University); David Conley and Kenneth Kempner (University of Oregon); Francis Griffith (University of Northern Colorado); William Plater (Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis); Richard Pratt (University of Hawaii); James Ratcliff (Penn State University); and Masaaki Ogasawara, Toshiyuki Nishimori and Toshiyuki Hosokawa (Hokkaido University). Production of the special issue in Japan was assisted by Masatake Wada, Wataru Ishida, Yoshihisa Yamada, Tomio Hosokawa and Taiko Ujima.

Although it would be very useful to have each of these articles published in both the Japanese and English languages, it is practical here to publish only their abstracts in both languages (and in a few instances, extended English summaries of Japanese articles). We hope that this first stage of translation will at least intensify efforts to exchange additional information between those interested in improving higher education in both countries. We believe we can continue to learn much from one another and hope that this special issue will stimulate additional dialogue and research.

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Guest editors for the special issue