

LIBRARIES

FOUNDED 1933
WINTER 2017
VOL. 81, NO. 1

KENTUCKY

5

COPYRIGHT
CORNER

15

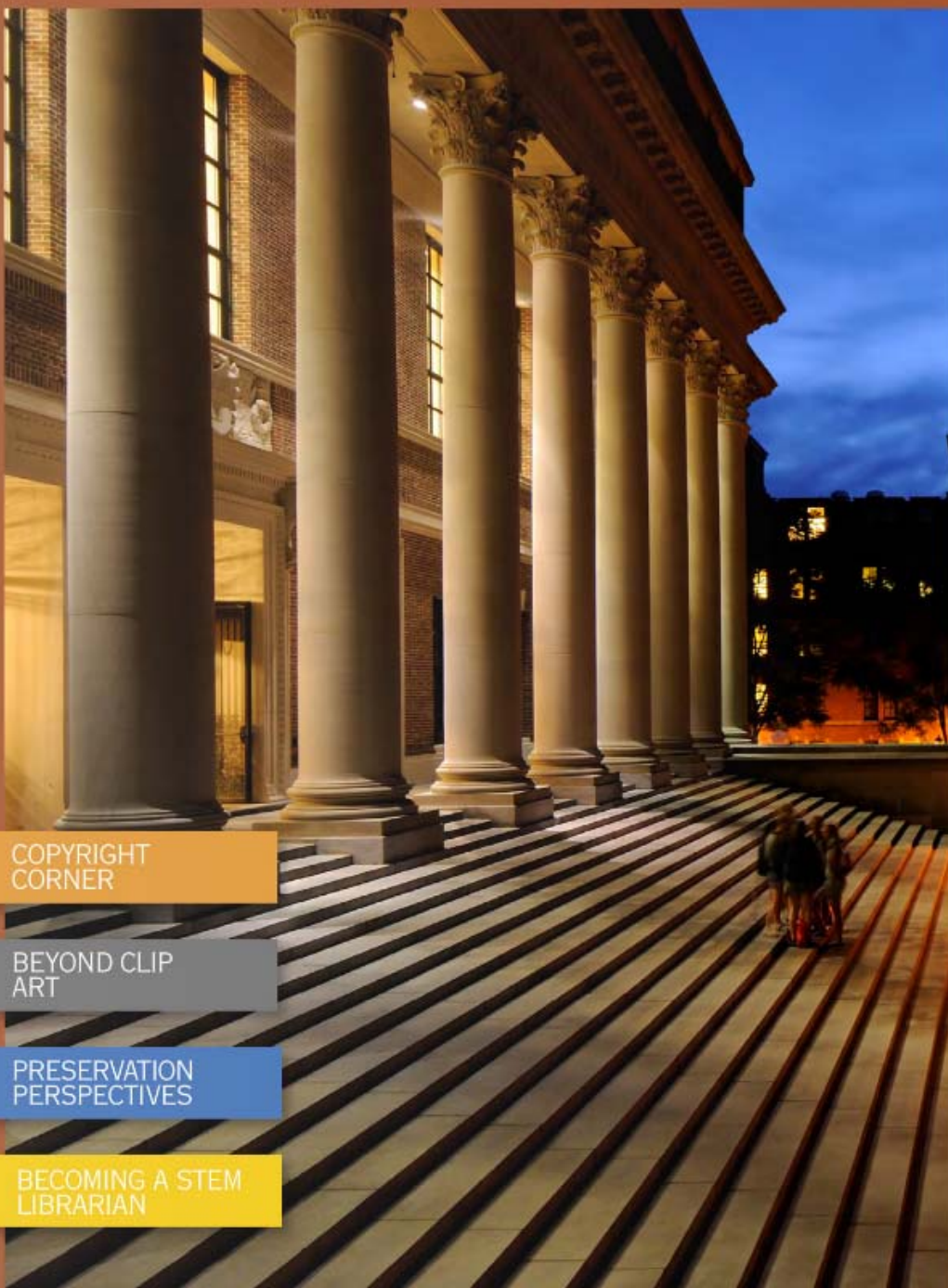
BEYOND CLIP
ART

21

PRESERVATION
PERSPECTIVES

23

BECOMING A STEM
LIBRARIAN





CONFUTING CONVENTIONAL WISDOM: ONE FOR-PROFIT UNIVERSITY LIBRARY'S ACCREDITATION EXPERIENCE

BY CHARLES BROWN • DEAN OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, SULLIVAN UNIVERSITY

Initially incorporated on March 2, 1962, Sullivan University System, Inc. (SUS) is the parent corporation of Sullivan University (SU), which is a private, family-owned, for-profit, level-V institution of higher education located in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Sullivan University comprises the Louisville main campus, the Lexington branch campus, and the Fort Knox extension campus, plus two new learning centers: one each in eastern and northern Kentucky. At present, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accredits a total of thirteen for-profit universities, which equates to 1.6% of the commission's 798 overall members (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, *Member, Candidate and Applicant List*). Of those, including Sullivan, the commission accredits four

level-V or above for-profit universities: similarly, that equates to 1.5% of the 259 level-V and above members. As evidenced by recent data from regional accreditors' web pages, these percentages – noted by Kinser in 2005 (72) some eleven years ago – are still consistent with similar percentages for the other U.S. regional accreditors recognized by the Department of Education, i.e. between about 1 and 2 percent.

According to the university's contemporaneous newsletter accounts, Sullivan University's long-held SACSCOC membership began in January 1977 – fifteen years after it was founded and the year after the University of Phoenix was founded (Harrison). Also, according to the most recent SACSCOC member list Sullivan's founding was significantly earlier than

the other SACSCOC level-V members. At that time, SACSCOC impeled its Carpenter Committee to study the issue of whether to allow for-profit schools to apply for accreditation. The committee decided that the determinant for accreditation and membership should be the quality of the education provided by the institution, and not its form of ownership. Accordingly, the SACSCOC Delegate Assembly met in New Orleans on December 15, 1977 and voted Sullivan Junior College of Business to accreditation candidacy status. Whereupon, Sullivan was signally invested with SACSCOC full candidate status as the first private, for-profit school in the southern region.

Sullivan's initial grant was for five years, to perform a self-study and to undergo a corresponding SACSCOC comprehensive evaluation. On December 11, 1984, the Commission granted the university a ten-year accreditation reaffirmation. That year was also momentous for SACSCOC's prescient introduction of the construct of institutional effectiveness: in his *Higher Education Accreditation: How It's Changing, Why It Must*, Paul Gaston observed, "assessment offered to accreditation the prospect of making evaluation both more sensitive to institutional mission and more consistently rigorous. The shift was confirmed in 1984 when the Southern Association of College and Schools (SACS) [sic] introduced the expectation that institutions demonstrate their 'effectiveness' " (23). Subsequently, Sullivan was reaffirmed by a decennial review in 1994, which was also the year the Apollo Group went public. To replace the superannuated *Criteria for Accreditation*, which had been adopted in December 1984 and in effect for the sixteen years from 1987 through 2003, SACSCOC adopted its new *Principles of Accreditation* standards inclusive of the inaugural QEP requirements in 2004. As a consequence, the university's 2004 decennial review was postponed until 2005, at which time, its accreditation was reaffirmed until 2015. Most recently, after that successful 2015 decennial review, the university's regional accreditation is now reaffirmed until 2025. (NOTE: for tactical insights into the university's 2015 compliance strategy, see my article, "Throat Cut with Diamonds: Surviving Regional Compliance Certification.")

"Conventional wisdom," may be defined as the generally accepted belief, opinion, judgment, or a set of widely-accepted paradigms. Conventional wisdom accrues organically from many different sources, because opinions, as the hackneyed saying goes, are like noses: everybody has one. For example, my personal conventional wisdom relating to what Patricia Steele, Dean of the University of Maryland Libraries, has described as "the living library: an intellectual ecosystem" is irredeemably grounded in my own professional experiences. I came to the Sullivan University library twenty years ago from a not-for-profit library, and brought my NFP library processes and procedures with me. During my time at the university, many other new employees came onboard from other for-profit universities. These new employees' unique extramural perspectives always seemed to confute the prevailing paradigms regarding for-profit library expectations, and they also seemed to underscore a library exception to what is perceived as the norm. To be sure,

this personal or anecdotal conventional wisdom does not rise to the level of either the indisputable "ocular proof" that Othello demanded of Iago to confirm Desdemona's infidelity, or actual forensic research. Nonetheless, "conventional wisdom" is still a formidable agent in the marketplace of ideas.

These personal or anecdotal "nonscientific" perspectives are augmented with research conducted by several authors including Angulo, Berg, Bok, Bowen, Breneman, Brown, Chace, Christensen, Deming, Ezell, Goldrick-Rab, and others listed in the Works Cited list. Some for-profit higher education perspectives are highly ideologized, politicized, and polemicized, which results in a polarized divergence. Many researchers, as exemplified by Reif, allow that, "At its best, for-profit education can help many and provide needed educational opportunities" (251), although – as with any industry – some members' negative actions affect the entire industry (Pond 2). This author concurs with Natale that "knowledge is power" and advocates an objective, non-vitriol-charged perspective.

Among the many researched monographs and articles, one important author whose works inform this article is Dr. Kevin Kinser. Widely known through his numerous objective publications, he is Associate Professor and Senior Researcher at the Institute for Global Education Policy Studies at the University at Albany, State University of New York. Since the early 1990s, Dr. Kinser has studied non-traditional and alternative higher education, particularly the polycscape related to private for-profit institutions of higher education.

Another notable article is Davis, Adams, & Hardesty's "Academic Libraries in For-Profit Schools of Higher Education," which summarizes the history and characteristics of for-profit academic libraries. The authors admit that: "the characteristics of libraries of for-profit institutions in other states may vary, depending on state and regional accreditation standards and other factors" (574). In his new book, *Class Clowns: How the Smartest Investors Lost Billions in Education*, Jonathan A. Knee, professor of professional practice and co-director of the media and technology program at Columbia Business School, de-problematizes market sustainability: "Regardless of whether for-profit universities try to do well by doing good, with respect to the operation of these ventures, one basic fact is incontrovertible: One cannot do good for very long if the business does not do well enough to survive" (206). Notwithstanding, library valuation methods are "difficult to deploy in academic environments," primarily because – according to Poll and Payne: "most library services have no equivalent on the common market and therefore no 'market prices' can be determined" (548).

Dr. Megan Oakleaf, Associate Professor of Library and Information Science in the iSchool at Syracuse University indicates – in her 2010 comprehensive research report entitled "The Value Of Academic Libraries" – that despite library valuation concerns, "few authors would disagree that libraries must demonstrate that they use financial resources effectively and responsibly" (21). So, whether one superimposes a positivistic or negativistic construction upon for-profit higher education, the

execution of best fiduciary practices inarguably posits a *sine qua non* prerequisite to sustain any higher education institution and its library.

Davis, Adams, & Hardesty say that: "Kinser agrees that for-profit institutions do increase access to higher education for students not served by traditional academia. He finds, however, that this access comes at a cost, including the expense incurred by the students, the limited scope of the programs, and the limited capacity of most proprietary schools" (569). Likewise, they assert that "The characteristics of libraries of for-profit institutions in other states may vary, depending on state and regional accreditation standards and other factors. Particularly in some of the larger systems the authors visited, we did find libraries with admirable resources and services, staffed by qualified professionals who enjoy solid administrative support" (574). Davis, Adams, & Hardesty's research, summarized and quoted in the following list, has produced a few additional confutable instances of conventional wisdom from which the Sullivan Library may be summarily counter-distinguished:

- Some for-profit libraries' constituencies comprise all commuters.
- Many other student and academic services may only be perfunctory since the overriding emphasis [is] placed on classes.
- Some for-profits exist with no library, since as Ruch notes: "investing in traditional, books-on-the-shelf libraries is a hard sell...where corporate finance officers find it difficult to see the return on investment" (41).
- Electronic databases supportive of 24/7 intramural and extramural access to all institutional constituencies formed the primary library collections.
- ILL was emphasized as a supplemental collection development strategy for students, but very few students used it.
- Processing and cataloging are either third-party or centralized, in which latter case machine-readable cataloging record metadata was sent from third-party vendors to librarians at another location for uploading.
- Ordering is also likely to be very centralized, although on-site librarians may recommend books for purchase to a centralized head librarian who determined ordering for all locations.
- To conserve costs, library professional staffing is minimal, often only one person with no staff. When the librarian was off, the office/faculty or staff members could unlock the library door for students during certain designated times.
- Most of the regionally accredited for-profit institutions grant the associate degree. It is the only degree awarded by twenty-five institutions, while another twenty-eight schools offer higher degrees in addition to the associate.
- Lack of curricular needs for a library.
- Lack of interest in lifelong learning.

- Lack of academic qualifications in leadership. Although even at traditional institutions the presidents are increasingly distanced from academics by the need for an increased emphasis on fundraising, most come from an academic background with an appreciation of scholarship and the research process, as well as an understanding of the difference between education and training (574-576).
- "General education is becoming less and less a distinctive characteristic of these institutions" (Connell 5).

In compliance with the SACSCOC accreditation standards as enumerated in *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* the Sullivan University library has been able to continue to confute all the commonly conventionalized perceptions of for-profit libraries, while developing what SACSCOC calls a "culture of assessment" – adherence to the compliance standards informs both the library's assessment strategy and abets assessment acculturation.

A "culture of assessment" has occurred when an idea, action, function, or initiative has been organizationally routinized as an ingrained part of an institution's *modus operandi*. Simultaneously, a "culture of assessment" also appears to underlie recent remarks by SACSCOC President Belle Wheelan, who – in a 2015 *Inside Higher Ed* article entitled "Accreditation's Real Cost (and Value)" – stated that: "the reality [is] that accreditation activities are part of regular faculty service and committee work.... Exemplar colleges – and even corporations like IBM – do not consider the work of improvement to be an onerous task or something that an accrediting body forces them to do, but an essential part of their management" (Wheelan & Elgart n. p.).

Relatedly, IBM's former chairman, Louis Gerstner, stated that, "Until I came to IBM, I probably would have told you that culture was just one among several important elements in any organization's makeup and success ... I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value" (173). According to library assessment expert Joseph R. Matthews, a culture of assessment predicates a *kaizen* ("improvement") ethos in which "decisions are based on an analysis of local data ... and focus on facts" (6) and – to paraphrase Macbeth – buckled within the belt of rule.

Focusing her research specifically on factors influencing the culture of assessment in academic libraries, Meredith Gorran Farkas also concludes that "what constitutes a 'culture of assessment' is very much in the eye of the beholder." She ultimately defines it as "where assessment is a regular part of institutional practice" (150). However, she adds that – among a portfolio of identifiable influences – "One of the characteristics that is most significantly associated with a culture of assessment is impossible for a library to change – the regional accrediting association for its institution" (158). In delineating the university's long association with its regional accreditors, its library has been

especially influenced to achieve compliance through assimilation of a culture of assessment.

As this article has shown, the university library's long-held SACSCOC membership – especially (and perhaps, counterintuitively to conventional wisdom) within the rarefied context of its for-profit status – has benefitted its assessment acculturation.

Conventional wisdom about for-profit higher education should not be allowed to, in Suzanne Mettler's words, "sabotage the American dream" because, as Anya Kamenetz observes in her

book, *DIY U: Edupunks, Edupreneurs, and the Coming Transformation of Higher Education*, "people who have worked on both sides of the line tell me that for-profit colleges – operating under pressure to meet independent accreditation standards, federal and state regulatory burdens, pay taxes, satisfy the customer, and turn a profit too – of necessity pay far more attention to both outcomes and cost than your average nonprofit serving a similar population of students" (126).

Charles Brown
cbrown@sullivan.edu

WORKS CITED

- Angulo, A.J. *Diploma Mill\$: How For-profit Colleges Stuffed Students, Taxpayers, and the American Dream*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.
- Banta, Trudy W. and Catherine A. Palomba. *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass & Pfeiffer Imprints, 2014.
- Berg, Gary, A. *Lessons from the Edge: For-Profit and Nontraditional Higher Education in America*. Praeger, 2005.
- Bok, Derek. *Higher Education in America*. Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Bok, Derek. *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*. Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Bowen, William, G. & McPherson, Michael S. *Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education*. Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Breneman, David W., Pusser, Brian & Turner, S.E. (Eds.). *Earnings from Learning: The Rise of For-Profit Universities*. State University of New York Press, 2006.
- Brown, Charles L. "Throat Cut with Diamonds: Surviving Regional Compliance Certification." *Kentucky Libraries*, vol. 79, no. 3, summer 2015, pp. 2-7.
- Brown, Walter F. "Student Perception of Instructional Quality by Adjunct Faculty in Undergraduate Business – Degree Programs at Accredited For-Profit Colleges and Universities." Unpublished Dissertation. University of La Verne, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2010.
- Cellini, Stephanie R. "For-Profit Higher Education: An Assessment of Costs and Benefits." *National Tax Journal*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2012, pp. 153–179.
- Chace, William, M. (2006). *100 Semesters: My Adventures as Student, Professor, and University President, and What I Learned Along the Way*. Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Christensen, Clayton M. & Eyring, Henry J. *The Innovative University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out*. Jossey-Bass, 2011.
- Connell, Kevin W. *Degrees of Deception: America's For-profit Higher Education Fraud*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016.
- Davis, J. Y., Adams, M., & Hardesty, L. "Academic Libraries in For-Profit Schools of Higher Education." *College & Research Libraries*, vol. 72, no. 6, 2010, pp. 568–582. Retrieved from <http://crli.acrl.org/content/72/6/568.full.pdf+html>.
- Deming, David J., Goldin, Claudia, & Katz, L. F. (2012). "The For-profit Postsecondary School Sector: Nimble Critters or Agile Predators?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 26, no.1, 2012, 139–164. doi:10.1257/jep.26.1.139.

- Ezell, Allen, & Bear, John. *Degree Mills: The Billion-Dollar Industry That Has Sold Over a Million Fake Diplomas*. Prometheus Books, 2005.
- Gaston, Paul L. *Higher Education Accreditation: How It's Changing, Why It Must*. Stylus Publishing, 2013.
- Gerstner, Louis V. *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance? Leading a Great Enterprise through Dramatic Change*. HarperBusiness, 2002.
- Goldrick-Rab, Sara. *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Gorran Farkas, Meredith, Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, and Amy Harris Houk. "Bridges and Barriers: Factors Influencing a Culture of Assessment in Academic Libraries." *College & Research Libraries*, vol. 76, no.2, 2015, pp. 150-169. Academic Search Complete. Web. 12 Dec. 2016. Also, available at: <http://crl.acrl.org/content/76/2/150.full.pdf+html>.
- Harrison, T. L. "A Response to the Challenges in Proprietary For-Profit Higher Education: A Case Study of the University of Phoenix." Unpublished Dissertation. Saint Louis University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2016.
- Hentschke, Lechuga, V. M & Tierney, G. C. (Eds.). *For-Profit Colleges and Universities: Their Markets, Regulation, Performance, and Place in Higher Education*. Stylus Publishing, 2012.
- Hersh, Richard H. & Merrow, John (Eds.). *Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.
- Jaschik, Scott. "Not So Gainfully Employed." *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved November 4, 2016 https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/05/31/study-finds-most-who-enroll-profit-colleges-experience-earning-declines?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=df5eb913b9-DNU20160531&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcb04421-df5eb913b9-197630421, 2016, May 31.
- Kamenetz, Anya. *DIY U: Edupunks, Edupreneurs, and the Coming Transformation of Higher Education*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2010.
- Kinser, K. "A Profile of Regionally Accredited For-profit Institutions of Higher Education." In B. Pusser (Ed.), *Arenas of Entrepreneurship: Where Nonprofit and For-profit Institutions Compete* (New Directions for Higher Education, No. 129, pp. 69-84). Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Kinser, Kevin, & Program for Research on Private Higher, E. Access in U.S. *Higher Education: What Does the For-profit Sector Contribute?* PROPHE Working Paper Series. WP No. 14. Program for Research on Private Higher Education. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED507316.pdf><http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED507316.pdf>, 2009.
- Kinser, Kevin. "For-Profit Institutions Need to Be Classified, Too." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53.30 (March 30, 2007a): B9-B10.
- Kinser, Kevin. *From Main Street to Wall Street: The Transformation of For-Profit Higher Education*. Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- Kinser, Kevin. "Sources of Legitimacy in U.S. For-Profit Higher Education." In S. Slantcheva & D. C. Levy (Eds.), *Private Higher Education in Post-Communist Europe: In Search of Legitimacy*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 257-276.
- Kinser, Kevin. "What Phoenix Doesn't Teach Us about For-Profit Higher Education." *Change*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2006, pp. 24-29.
- Kirschner, Ann. "Innovations in Higher Education? Hah!" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 58.32 (2012): B6-B9.
- Knee, Jonathan A. *Class Clowns: How the Smartest Investors Lost Billions in Education*. Columbia University Press, 2016.
- Lechuga, Vincente M. *The Changing Landscape of the Academic Profession: The Culture of Faculty at For-profit Colleges and Universities*. Routledge, 2006.
- Massy, William F. *Reengineering the University: How to Be Mission Centered, Market Smart, and Margin Conscious*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.
- Matthews, Joseph R. *Library Assessment in Higher Education*. Libraries Unlimited, 2014.
- Mettler, Suzanne. *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*. Basic Books, 2014.

- Meyer, J. "The For-Profit Library? What Libraries and Learning Resource Centers Bring to the For-Profit College." Retrieved November 4, 2016, from <http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2011/03/02/the-for-profit-library-what-libraries-and-learning-resource-centers-bring-to-the-for-profit-college/>, 2011, March.
- Natale, Samuel, Libertella, Anthony, & Doran, Caroline. "For-Profit Education: The Sleep of Ethical Reason." *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 126, no. 3, 2015, pp. 415-421.
- Oakleaf, Megan J. *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*. Association of College and Research Libraries, American Library Association, 2010.
- Poll, Roswitha, and Philip Payne. "Impact Measures for Library and Information Services." *Library Hi Tec*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2006, pp. 547-562.
- Pond, Wallace. *Why Attacking For-Profit Colleges and Universities Is Bad for All of Higher Education*. Published on August 28, 2016. Retrieved on December 12, 2016, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-attacking-for-profit-colleges-universities-bad-all-wallace-pond>
- Pope, Loren. *Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools That Will Change the Way You Think about Colleges*. Penguin Books, 2012.
- Reif, R. E. "Knowledge Is Power: Reform of For-Profit Educational Institutions on an Individual and Institutional Level." *Drake Law Review*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2012, pp. 251-289.
- Ruch, Richard S. *Higher Ed, Inc.: The Rise of the For-Profit University*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Scott, G. A., & US Government Accountability Office. *Postsecondary Education: Student Outcomes Vary at For-Profit, Nonprofit, and Public Schools. Report to Congressional Requesters*. GAO-12-143. US Government Accountability Office, 2011.
- Slaughter, Sheila, & Rhoades, Gary. *Academic Capitalism in the New Economy*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation*. SACSCOC, August 2011.
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. *Member, Candidate and Applicant List*, July 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/webmemlist.pdf> December 10, 2016.
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. *Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. 2nd ed. SACSCOC, 2012.
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. 5th ed. SACSCOC, December 2011.
- Sperling, John, & Tucker, Robert W. *For-profit Higher Education: Developing a World-Class Workforce*. Transaction, 1997.
- Sperling, John. *Rebel with a Cause: The Entrepreneur Who Created the University of Phoenix and the For-Profit Revolution in Higher Education*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000.
- Steele, P., Cronrath, D., Vicchio, S. P., & Foster, N. E. *The Living Library: An Intellectual Ecosystem*. Association of College & Research Libraries, 2015.
- Sykes, Charles J. *Fail U: The False Promise of Higher Education*. St. Martin's Press, 2016.
- Tierney, William G., & Hentschke, Guilbert C. *New Players Different Game: Understanding the Rise of For-Profit Colleges and Universities*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Wheelan, B.S. & Elgart, M.A. (2015, October 22). *Accreditation's Real Cost (and Value)*. Retrieved December 13, 2016, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/10/22/real-costs-accreditation-and-process-value-essay>.