

26.7.2024

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Title

Mission diversity and the tension between prestige and effectiveness : an overview of US higher education

Publication year

2008

Source/Footnote

In: Higher education policy. - 21 (2008) 2, S. 175 - 192

Inventory number

24340

Keywords

Ausland : USA : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Ausland : USA : Studenten, Studium, Lehre ; Hochschule und Staat : allgemein

Abstract

Higher education in the US has long prized mission diversity as illustrated in the range of its colleges and universities including community colleges, baccalaureate (or liberal arts) colleges, doctoral-granting universities, and special-focus institutions, as well as its public, private non-profit, and private for-profit forms of control. This paper outlines some of the elements that contribute to US mission diversity, including long-held beliefs and facilitating structures. It then identifies some key trends currently affecting mission diversity with specific attention to the rise of market forces and shifting state policy. The result is a growing tension between institutional effectiveness and prestige that must be resolved. The paper concludes by offering suggestions to maintaining mission diversity within a dynamic market-driven environment. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)