

Inequity Wins Again

Two weeks after Americans learned that wealthy parents had been bribing their kids’ way into some of the nation’s top universities, a new study arrived to remind us of yet another way that the deck is stacked — legally — against students from low-income families.

Researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of Arizona examined the recruitment strategies of 15 flagship universities and found that they had shown a bias toward affluent students from out of state instead of high-achieving low-income and minority students from within the state.

The phenomenon is driven by the universities’ need to find reliable revenue sources in an era of state disinvestment, the researchers concluded.

Their report, “Recruiting the Out-of-State University,” was funded by the Joyce Foundation, which promotes racial equality and economic mobility. (See Page A26.)

Universities named in the report defended their commitment to serving low-income students, saying that revenue from out-of-state recruits is used to support scholarships for in-state students.

But a recent article in the journal *Teachers College Record* by Robert Kelchen, an assistant professor of higher education at Seton Hall University, found that “although state residents do not appear to be subsidizing an amenities arms race to attract students from other states, the additional tuition revenue coming from nonresident students is not being used to help subsidize in-state students.” Kelchen’s paper urged more research on how exactly universities

are spending that windfall, if not on in-state students.

Corruptive Forces

The deck is stacked in favor of the wealthy, yes. But universities are also vulnerable to corruptive forces that extend far beyond the world of college admissions. Last week brought a bevy of reminders.

First there was the news that Duke University had agreed to pay the U.S. government the hulking sum of \$112.5 million to settle a research-fraud case involving a former researcher who had fabricated data in order to win grants from the National Institutes of Health and the Environmental Protection Agency. (See Page A22.)

A whistle-blower accused the university of trying to cover up the fraud, while the

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university said it hadn’t fully grasped the extent of the researcher’s misconduct — even after it fired her, in 2013. The business of chasing grants is fraught with peril.

So is the business of chasing victories on the field. An extortion case worthy of tabloid treatment last week served as a biting reminder.

Michael Avenatti, the celebrity lawyer, was charged with attempted extortion after authorities said he had threatened to expose under-the-table payments by Nike to college athletes and their families. The allegations, which had not been substantiated as

of late last week, carried echoes of the case of Nike’s competitor Adidas.

In the past year, prosecutors have unearthed a series of such payments involving Adidas — helping to shed some light on the shadowy underworld in which universities find themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, playing a role.

Tenuous Tenures

Hank M. Bounds said last week he would resign as president of the University of Nebraska system. In his departing message, he made plain the toll the post had exacted, calling it “personally demanding.” He was more specific when talking to a local newspaper, saying the job was “60 to 80 hours every week. It’s hard to work that many hours a week and be a good dad at the same time.”

For presidents and aspiring presidents, that view is familiar. When Eric W. Kaler, president of the University of Minnesota, announced last year that he would resign, he called the presidency “an incredibly demanding job, essentially seven days a week, evenings and nights included.” William H. McRaven, a former chancellor of the University of Texas system, called the job of leading an academic or medical institution “the toughest job in the nation.” (McRaven had seen his share of tough jobs; as a military commander he planned the raid that killed Osama bin Laden.)

Presidential tenures are also getting shorter. A 2017 American Council on Education study found that the average tenure for college leaders was 6.5 years, which was two years shorter than when measured a decade before.

But even as length of tenure shortens, some things never change. According to that same ACE study, the thing college presidents worry about most? Money.

Footnote

Colleges across the country love their campus squirrels. Students photograph them, tend to them, and try to save them. Some students even keep them as pets.

And now, at the University of Texas at Austin, they commemorate them. This year a yearbook will be published just for the campus squirrels, *The Daily Texan* reports.

An alumna, Marie Romano, is behind both the yearbook and related social-media accounts. The glossy book, *Squirrels of UT Austin*, will feature more than 200 squirrels divided into their respective classes (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors), coupled with pictures of the squirrels hanging — er, scurrying — around the campus.

Students, faculty, and staff will be able to purchase copies of the yearbook in May. Here’s hoping your Longhorn niece or nephew doesn’t just squirrel it away in a dusty closet.

—ANDY THOMASON AND DON TROOP



The State U. of New York’s board last month renamed six buildings on its New Paltz campus that originally honored Huguenot families who settled the area in colonial times but who also owned African slaves. The buildings now honor local places with Native American names.

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