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Our University: In State out of State

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Our University: In State out of State

Costs are always relative and secondary to value.

Governments cannot make universities by enactments of laws: Nor corporations by erections of edifices: The church cannot create them under the authority of heaven: The flattering eulogies of orators cannot adorn them with learning: Newspapers cannot puff them into being. Learned men-scholars- these are the only workmen who can build up universities. Provide charters and endowments- the necessary protection and capital - provide books and apparatus- the necessary tools: Then seek out sufficient scholars, and leave them to their work, as the intellectual engineers who alone are competent to do it.

Henry P. Tappan (1805-1881) President, University of Michigan

Institutions across the nation have provided out-of-state students in-state tuition as a means to increase revenue flow, increase enrollment and increase economic impact of a campus on the region where it is located. These are noble goals, but apart from giving away a university education, nothing will increase the movement of people across state borders to receive an education faster than an increase in the quality of teaching and scholarship.

In a study conducted at the end of the last century - sounds like a long time ago - it was found that the greatest single impact on local economies related to universities was not salaries, goods and services, construction spending, or sports events. According to Southeastern Louisiana university institutional researchers Beatrice Baldwin and others in *Estimating a University's Economic and Community Impact: Principles, Procedures, and Outcomes* found that the most significant impact on the local economy was the spending of college students: Young people aloft on Nikes with North Face angel wings, and cash in their pockets had a greater impact on the economy of Southeastern Louisiana than University payroll, spending or construction.

A similar study at Texas A&M University, conducted this year suggests that average payroll for the 23,000 Texas A&M and A&M System employees was nearly \$900 million, while student spending, was about \$450 million. Truth be told, aside from the System Offices located in College Station, student spending was the single largest contributor to the local economy.

In 2003, Allison M. Ohme, an Institutional Research Analyst at the University of Delaware found the same thing: Students spend \$350 million, while faculty and staff

contribute \$214 million, and University expenses add \$170 million. And the University of Delaware is the eighth largest employer in the state.

Students bring and spend money in dizzying amounts.

At Eastern Oregon University, where there is one tuition rate for all students, \$18,000 all-inclusive (sounds like a resort) no in-state/out-of-state distinction.

Texas is trying a novel idea, a \$10,000 bachelor's degree. I have to say that I like the concept. The problem is, neither I nor students will like the results. This may be the best example of "Yugo-ization" of higher education in the world. Texas should be very careful. It has a great system of higher education, but it may not be able to be all things to all people. You just can't power a racecar with an engine built from popsicle sticks and baling wire, and what this country needs are graduates with high-performance educations.

According to US News, "Many of the top public universities, such as the University of Michigan (ranked 27th among national universities by U.S. News) and the University of Vermont (ranked 88th among national universities by U.S. News) are such hot tickets that there are lots of well-qualified out-of-staters willing to pay their total out-of-state costs of more than \$40,000 a year."

Students represent the greatest economic impact on a campus and community, and they will cross state lines and pay tuition and fees according to the quality of the education they anticipate.

None of this is to say that costs cannot be contained to keep value high for students. Unnecessary programs should be eliminated. Anything other than high standards for faculty performance should not be tolerated. Appetites for athletics and extramural activity must be balanced. Efficiencies in maintenance should be found. And business-like approaches to the management of complex academic societies can be implemented. But if any of these actions are taken at the expense of a university's pursuit of excellence, pursued and policed by the faculty, no good will come from them.

In-state or out-of-state, educational excellence will draw a crowd.