

College Learning for the New Global Century, the 2007 LEAP report, argues persuasively that the outcomes of a liberal education are “essential for success in a global economy” and, indeed, that “the capabilities developed through a liberal education have become America’s most valuable economic asset.” Yet whether college learning for the new global century will be available to all students in the new global century may well depend on how U.S. higher education responds to the challenges and opportunities of globalization.

In sussing out these challenges and opportunities, the articles in the Featured Topic section of this issue focus on two ongoing developments. The first of these is the creation, through what is known as the Bologna Process, of a European Higher Education Area within which the comparability of quality assurance and degree standards is intended to facilitate greater academic mobility. In the lead article, Clifford Adelman presents an overview of key elements of the Bologna Process and urges their adaptation to U.S. higher education. This is followed by a less sanguine look at Bologna by Paul Gaston, who, in response to Adelman, calls for “standing up for the singular strengths of U.S. higher education—our long-standing commitment to broad access, our embrace of diversity as an educational good, and, most notably, our distinctive commitment to providing ‘tertiary level’ students with a liberal education.”

FROM THE EDITOR

The second development is the ongoing effort of the World Trade

Organization to bring higher education services within the purview of the General Agreement on Trade and Services. One result of the anticipated liberalization of trade in education, Andrew Ross explains, is the headlong rush of Anglophone universities into the global market for higher education services. “Will [liberal educational] ideals (and the job base built around them) wither away entirely in the entrepreneurial race to compete for a global market share,” Ross asks, “or will they survive only in one corner of the market—as the elite preserve of those who are able to pay top dollar for such hand-crafted attention?”

Sheldon Rothblatt too is concerned about the potential for increased stratification. As he considers the recent phenomenon of “branding,” whereby efforts to enhance reputation and prestige culminate in the creation of the “celebrity university,” Rothblatt notes the irony that even as “the branded institutions declare their commitment to affirmative action or (in France) ‘positive discrimination,’ the elite or merit selection necessary for international recognition invariably works against such policies. It is no secret that the most competitive students, exceptions apart, are drawn from the more comfortable families in any society.”

Enter Charles Murray. At a time when the outcomes of a liberal education are more necessary than ever before, and just as global trends conspire to threaten access to it, Murray steps forward to persuade the country that the BA degree—and the liberal education at the heart of it—should be reserved for those who score in the top 10 percent on the SAT or ACT. In response, and as a coda to this issue, Anthony Carnevale explains that just as *The Bell Curve* was rooted in bad science, Murray’s new book, *Real Education*, is rooted in bad economics.—DAVID TRITELLI

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