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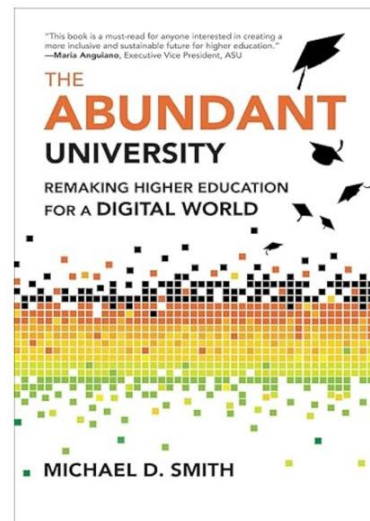
Selectivity has become a fetish, school rankings an obsession. We seem stuck with a system that, especially at the elite level, perpetuates class divisions. (p. 17)

In *The Abundant University: Remaking Higher Education for a Digital World*, Michael D. Smith, professor of information technology and marketing at Carnegie Mellon University, outlines how higher education's "scarcity" model can shift to an "abundance" model through expanding the use of digital technologies. Smith suggests that universities maintain a scarcity education model through the control of access, instruction, and credentials.

However, digital technologies have begun to transform higher education into an abundant model by removing scarcities, such as access and instruction through online courses. Smith defines the "abundant" model as utilizing digital technologies to make education accessible to lower-income or minority students.

The author points out that the business model employed by higher education institutions is not accessible to lower-income families. Currently, university degrees are used as a form of credentials for high-paying jobs. However, Smith proposes Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), online university programs, or other forms of online training as an "abundant" and accessible alternative to developing professional skills.

To conclude his argument, Smith reminds readers that the plan for an abundant education model only expands higher education and does not replace the traditional residential university experience. The author also responds to criticisms he has received for the abundant higher education model, such as online education may have lower quality instruction, residential university models are important for student development, and online education may create more inequities. In his closing remarks, Smith outlines how online education can provide access and opportunities that align with the higher goals and mission statements of higher education institutions.



Smith advances a strong argument for change in higher education by recounting the current system's inequities, especially for minoritized students. Like the K-12 schooling system, many reforms have transformed the higher education system into a competitive arena for status and selectivity (Ravitch, 2016). The author argues that generous donations to highly selective schools, large recruitment marketing campaigns, and increased student applications are important in the admissions and university rankings process. However, academic institutions with a high-ranking status, such as Harvard and Columbia, to name two, use unethical admissions practices, thus lowering the chances that a minoritized student is accepted. Further, Smith points out that the unethical admissions process only increases the SES gaps. It is this gap and others that online education may help lessen.

Another strength of Smith's argument is his analysis of the final pillar of the scarcity model, credentialing. He highlights how limited access to bachelor's degrees for minoritized students perpetuates inequalities in the hiring process. He argues that relying solely on degrees for hiring can be unethical, especially when experienced candidates without formal credentials are overlooked. He emphasizes the need for alternative credentialing pathways to ensure access to high-paying jobs for minority groups who are not able to afford traditional higher education. Although Smith convincingly argues a strong case for change in traditional higher education, there may be some limitations in the alternative solution he presents.

A potential limitation of the book is Smith's background in marketing. A part of Smith's solution is expanding the higher education market using corporate training, such as Google and Amazon. Smith makes several references to marketing and business theory models rather than to education models. He uses business theory, such as structural disruption, to explain the scarcity and abundance models. Structural disruption is a form of marketplace disruption that operates on both the supply and demand sides of the market, thus changing company competition. Smith's argument for an abundant education system could have been strengthened using educational or social theories and frameworks such as the Universal Design for Learning, which is an educational framework that describes many forms of accessibility in the classroom (CAST, 2024).

Further, to illustrate the use of the structural disruption model applied to higher education, Smith compares the higher education industry to his previous work concerning the entertainment industry: *Streaming, Sharing, Stealing: Big Data and the Future of Entertainment* (2017). However, a potential oversight in the comparison of the higher education and entertainment industries is the difference in stakeholders within each industry. Compared to the entertainment industry, education has vastly different stakeholders, such as students, professors, administrators, professionals, and policymakers, who affect the functioning of higher education (Marshall, 2018). Higher education is also partially publicly funded and operated, as opposed to the entertainment industry, which is entirely privately owned and operated. Smith largely focuses his analysis on the larger elite private universities such as Harvard and Columbia; however, there are many public universities or community colleges with lower tuition costs and forms of online or distance education access. It is unclear how some of these other stakeholders, such as administrators, policymakers, and

public higher education institutions, could be affected by the shift to an abundant higher education model.

Another potential concern with the abundance educational model is an expanded reliance on Google and Amazon training programs. As has been seen in the K-12 education system, this is problematic because corporate training programs for teachers and standardized tests have shifted K-12 education closer to a corporate profit model and taken the focus away from educating students (Ravitch, 2016). However, Smith presents Google and Amazon as only part of the solution. Another potential solution identified by Smith would be shifting higher education into online models, such as those now present at Southern New Hampshire University or Arizona State University's online education programs. In a blurb on the cover of *The Abundant University*, Maria Anguiano, an Executive Vice President at ASU, is quoted: "This book is a must-read for anyone interested in creating a more inclusive and sustainable future for higher education. A model such as this reduces reliance on corporate training programs while simultaneously reducing costs and increasing accessibility for higher education."

Smith's thesis of a "scarcity" model demonstrates a strong argument about accessibility for students in the current higher education system, and Smith achieves his "abundant" model thesis from a business theory perspective. Furthermore, Smith's abundant higher education model may need to consider existing educational frameworks and stakeholders. While some of his ideas may further commercialize education—such as online training programs through Google or Amazon—other ideas, such as modeling an online university in a way similar to the Southern New Hampshire University or Arizona State University online programs, may increase accessibility to higher education to a wider group of prospective students.

The Abundant University would interest people such as higher education professionals and administrators because it provides a solution to alternative forms of education, made accessible to large numbers of students. Smith presents a unique approach for making higher education accessible for students and provides practical examples of online course models for higher education leaders to consider as they navigate an ever-evolving digital world.

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About the Reviewer

Leslie Brown is a PhD student studying engineering education at Utah State University (USU). Leslie recently completed her master's degree in engineering education with a thesis focused on improving engineering instruction in high school classrooms. Leslie's research interests include increasing accessibility for higher education engineering students and increasing a sense of belonging among minoritized groups in engineering education and industry spaces. During her time at USU, Leslie has served as the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) chapter President and as the information chair for the national ASEE Student Division. For her research and service, Leslie has received awards such as the Master's researcher of the year and the Student Service award from USU's Department of Engineering Education.



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