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Advancing Trust in Higher Education

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PAEPCKE AUDITORIUM, ASPEN MEADOWS CAMPUS

ASPEN, COLORADO

Speakers:

Carol Christ

Dan Porterfield

Rob Reich

Peter Salovey

Facilitator:

We have an incredible panel here. Seated next to me here is Peter Saliday, the president of Yale University. He's had a number of different positions there, including as provost, as dean of the college, as dean of Yale's graduate school. And he was a professor of social psychology, in the psych department before assuming these administrative roles.

In the middle is Carol Crist. She's the chancellor at the University of California, Berkeley. She was, prior to that, the president of Smith College and she was before that, a professor of English at Berkeley.

And at the very end, the person here who runs the whole shop, Dan Porterfield, is the new president and CEO of the Aspen Institute. And he came from being the president of Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Before that, he was a professor of English at Georgetown University. So we actually have two university leaders here, professors of English and a social scientist.

I come from Stanford where they typically have engineers who run the university, which is a good thing too, but it's nice to have some humanists and social scientists here, which is my own disciplinary background.

So, I want to offer just a brief frame for our conversation and open it up to questions for the folks here. We'll leave about 10 or 15 minutes for questions from you. So, trust in higher education is a bit of a abstract concept, but if you've been participating in some of the sessions here at Aspen over the past couple of days, the idea of trust in the social institutions that help shape our lives is a common topic here to Aspen. And it's something that should be in the minds of every single person, every single citizen.

There's declining trust across a whole host of institutions and society, political institutions, social institutions, economic institutions, all different kinds, higher education has not an excluded from this. There are things that concern people about the corporatization, the increasing business-oriented model of the university. There are deepening perceptions elitism, especially of some of our leading colleges and universities, there are worries about a liberal bias amongst the professoriate or the academic talent at universities, the professors, there are concerns as well about ever rising tuition in an era of economic instability and insecurity for people.

These have led, as I say, to declining trust within higher education. I add one more very important factor, observation, about trust and Higher Ed. In addition to all the things I just mentioned, one of the chief products, not a word I'd like to use by a chief outcome of Higher Ed is the development and dissemination of knowledge, and of an aspiration to emphasize and to champion the truth. One additional sign of increasing distrust and higher ed is the increasing distrust of science, of fact, and indeed, of knowledge itself sometimes, hastened, I would add by another topic of conversation widespread here at Aspen this year,

widespread everywhere, the role of social media leading to or facilitating the distrust we have of objectivity and truth.

So I'm going to end this framing just by quoting a really nice paragraph from the former dean of college at Harvard University, Harry Lewis. Just a few years ago, he wrote the following: "If the public comes to assume that colleges and universities are like any other businesses, to be suspected of ulterior motives and everything and their members do, then support for their activities will collapse. The for-profits can provide job training. Moocs and online education can provide general education for a leisure class, and private industry and government labs can do the research if universities can't be counted on to do it untainted by financial interests. If universities," he summed up, "Are about the pursuit of truth, they give up, at their peril, that aspiration."

So, I want to begin there, because one of the things that dominates public conversation is the questions about students, free speech on campus, are students snowflakes, all these kinds of things about the teaching function of Higher Ed, but the knowledge production function, the pursuit of truth, the discovery of new ideas and dissemination of those ideas, doesn't get as much airing. So let's start with basic research as one of the core missions of higher education. How can universities do a better job of communicating this ever-important function about basic research and the production and dissemination of knowledge? Peter, I'm going to start with you.

Peter Saliday: Sure. So, first of all, thank you for inviting me and pleasure to be here with all of you. Dan, congratulations on the new position. All thrilled for you. So first of all, there's a little bit of, I think, a false dichotomy between basic research and applied research, or translational research, and it's often very hard to know what kinds of research are going to have immediate applications, or even harder to know what kind of research has application way down the line.

There are many kinds of research scholarship that is important and certainly research that we think is basic, that is with no obvious immediate application is incredibly important, as well, but that dichotomy, that line is sometimes drawn a little too-

Facilitator: Let's just call it research, then, no matter how we apply it.

Peter Saliday: So, we just call it research. Let's say research. So then part of the challenge for us is to communicate the ways in which research finds its way outside the university. And so everybody's got a cell phone in your pocket, many of the components of that cell phone are based on university research. Your kid's got vaccinated, I assume. A lot of those vaccines were developed in university-based research, and it's not just science and technology, right?

New Understandings of ethics and philosophy that make their way into the public might have started as university based projects. So I think, in the

university, that is fairly obvious to all of us, but we don't do a very good job communicating to the general public. The incentive structure within the university rewards people for publishing for the other experts in their field, rather than for more general communication. I think we have to do a better job of it.

Now. I think it's no accident when you look around and ask why is it that the tech industry boomed, within, say 40 miles of Stanford University? Why is it that biotech and Pharma is finding its way to Cambridge, Massachusetts? In New Haven, Connecticut, I can't tell quite a story like Silicon Valley, but we are the only city in Connecticut increasing in population. We're the only part of Connecticut with positive job creation. Why is that happening?

It's a more modest story, but it's still a story in our local context. That's happening because of, often, university research that is finding its way toward application and commercialization. Dean Lewis is right. There is a danger. You have to make sure that research is truth driven as its first purpose. But again, I wouldn't draw a such a bright line that says, "But if it has commercial potential if could be used in people's real lives, and create jobs and grow the economy in some way or another," that, that's a bad thing. That's a good thing. And we don't tell that story very well.

Carol Crist:

Yeah. I'd like to add to what Peter said, which I agree with everything you said, is that there's a bit of a disconnect between research, large, in capital letters, and particular areas of research. I don't think you'll find a person who doesn't think the medical advances that are so extraordinary are not wonderful, in the universities don't play a very major role in them.

If you think about the CRISPR Cas9 technology, for example, or CRISPR Cas9, discovery and then technology that's revolutionizing agriculture, revolutionizing medicine. That came from basic research in the laboratory or take information technology. So I think there are a few areas of considerable public controversy. Climate change is the obvious example, in which there is public controversy, and that somehow paints all of research in a particular color, whereas there are other areas of research, the extraordinary advances in astrophysics and understanding the nature of the universe, that I do think there's broad public support for it.

Dan Porterfield:

I'll add a bit of a twist to that, which is that I think one of the best cases to make for the value of basic research is that it is empowering to young people early in their college careers to get the opportunity to work directly with knowledge creators in order to become, themselves, capable of that spark of creativity that allows them to ask a question that no one's ever posed before, to find an answer that no one's ever looked for, and that one of the ways we can best make our case in the public space is by showing those institutions like Berkeley and Yale, and absolutely Franklin and Marshall College, were kids, 18 and 19 years old, are getting the chance to find their own extra galactic pulsar or figure

out their own way of marking a mutation, or go out and in Tuscany and find a chip off a vase that depicts childbirth 6000 years ago, all of which my kids at F&M have done. And that also makes the case because older people always want to see young people getting the chance to develop the greatness within them.

Facilitator: Good. I'm going to push this one step further on this, which is to observe that one other possible sign of a declining trust within the realm of Higher Ed and particularly within research, is the decline of public funding for research within higher education. So despite, what you've just said, in addition to general public distrust, we also see fewer public dollars. The public dollars, one might think, are less tainted by commercial or financial interest in the way that Harry Lewis was suggesting.

Um, how should we think about philanthropic substitution for basic research dollars? Philanthropic, obviously, plays a huge role at places like Stanford, Yale, Berkeley, Aspen Institute, as well. Are philanthropic dollars an adequate substitute for public dollars in basic research.

Peter Saliday: No. And the reason is, despite how generous people are, and despite how grateful we are when we receive a donor support for research, there aren't enough donor dollars to replace, for example, the 30 plus billion dollars of research funding that comes from NIH, and that's just NIH. Add to that NSF and Department of Energy and et Cetera. It's just too much. It has to be public, it has to be a public commitment.

What's good is, historically, research funding by the government has received bipartisan support. And what's also good is, at least in the most recent cycle, NIH got a pretty nice boost. So in the long term, over the last several decades, yeah, there's a decline in funding and there's certainly a decline in funding relative to the number of particularly young scientists and others with great ideas who want funding. It's gotten really difficult for them. But there's some bright lights here, the bipartisan support, the recent increase in NIH, all of that is good. I think we welcome private philanthropy for research, don't misinterpret anything I've just said, particularly this audience, but it will never replace a government funding,

Carol Crist: Although I think there's such a value in the private philanthropy that's coming increasingly into research. One of the things I've been surprised increasingly to hear from faculty is their opinion that private dollars are a freer source of support for their research than public dollars. That public dollars often have more restrictions, are more risk averse, whereas there are private philanthropists who are extraordinarily ambitious for humankind, and the problems they want to solve, like the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative to eliminate childhood disease at Stanford, UCSF, and Berkeley.

So, I think that the growth and complexity of the way in which research is being funded now is not a, "Oh, we have to find philanthropic dollars. It's too bad philanthropic dollars are replacing public dollars. But isn't it wonderful that we also have an increasing influx of philanthropic dollars from many big fortunes into the supportive [crosstalk 00:13:41]

Peter Saliday: It's complimentary.

Dan Porterfield: I was going to say it could be strategic, because philanthropic donation can jumpstart a new idea that's really out of the box, maybe cross disciplinary that gets people working outside the normal lanes and bringing them together to take a new approach to a problem.

In our case, we got a very significant grant from Howard Hughes Foundation in order to bring together our students to do three things at a clinic that serves the Amish population. There's a tremendous amount of genetic mutations that cause devastating childhood diseases, and those three things were, one, find the mutations through genomics research, two get the babies into early healthcare if they had the mutation, even if they hadn't presented conditions of the illness, and three, from a public health perspective, go around house to house, give out brochures to the Amish families and explained to them the benefits of prenatal genomics testing, and that integration of research, clinical care and public health wouldn't get funded by the government, but with private gifts we can then do something special.

Carol Crist: Yeah. I've also had conversations with private philanthropists in which they say, "I want to invest in the risky research, the research which may not have a certainty of success, but may also result in an extraordinary discovery.

Peter Saliday: I think these are really important points. High risk, high reward research, it is difficult to get government funding for it. It's, in a way too politically charged. If it fails, it looks like the government has failed. It's a very important role that private philanthropy plays.

Facilitator: I'm tempted to ask there what would count as high risk, high reward research in English or in psychology or whether or not all of this is going to STEM fields, which, itself, might be terrific for all the reasons you just described, but I'm worried, my little humanist is thinking, "What about the humanities? What about philosophy? What about English? What about history?"

Dan Porterfield: Okay. I couldn't help noticing as I walked in that one of the greatest linguists in the history of linguistics and America, Deborah Tannen is in the audience. Now, I don't know how you were funded right earlier in your career at Georgetown University, but she's the one that wrote the book. You Just Don't Understand, that sparked decades of awareness, still more to do, about the gender dynamics that we experienced in how we relate to one another. The power of that kind of research is enormous for how we live our lives and how we connect as people.

Facilitator: All right, let me move away from question about research now to another thing connected, I think, to the declining trust within higher education, and having you three on the panel here is especially appropriate for this question, I think. On the one hand, places like Yale and places like Berkeley in places like F&M have been striving to become what are often described as global universities, places that aim to serve the world. And in fact, research is a global public good. It's meant to be shared with everyone, not just with citizens.

So graduate students at places like Yale and Berkeley are hugely international. Yale has need blind admissions for undergraduates who are international, not just for citizens. At the same time, the rise of populism and distrust leaves us with questions about how are universities have rooted in a place? What's their obligation, if any, to California, the University of California at Berkeley to Yale University in New Haven or in Connecticut? As you strive to become a global university, how do you think about the rootedness of the campus and the obligations that you have to the people or to the citizens of the place where you actually are located?

Carol Crist: Well, of course, California has a foundational responsibility to the people of California to educate it's young people, but that includes having a diverse student body that has students from outside the state of California, and students from other countries. Unless colleges and universities give their students a global fluency, an ability to move across borders to work in international teams, they are compromising the ultimate success of those students in their chosen careers. Careers are global, and so it's a service both to the...

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:18:04]

Carol Crist: ... careers are global and so it's a service both to the students of California and as well as those extraordinarily talented students that come from outside of California.

Peter Saliday: Yeah, I think that's very right. I think we have local obligations, no doubt about it. We want to be a partner with the City of New Haven, just an example, we give a scholarship to every high school student who graduates from a public high school in New Haven to take anywhere in the state they want, right? It's called New Haven Promise Scholarship. We partner up in many other ways with the city and increasingly with the state. But we also want to create the most dynamic and interesting and educationally fascinating environment we can and that's means students are going to come from all over the world, and we're going to be at a bit of crossroads. It also is the way in which great research gets done, with ideas from all over the world and I think that's a very important feature of university.

Facilitator: Dan go ahead.

Dan Porterfield: So globalization gives us this feeling of connectedness, but it also gives us a feeling of fragmentation. The digital information revolution, we feel connected, but we also feel fragmented. One of the thinkers and leaders that's really influenced me for this dynamic is Jack DeGioia the president of Georgetown University. I worked for Jack for 10 years and he understood that Georgetown University is a Catholic institution, could and should play a role in promoting knowledge and freedom around the world. And we developed programming in China, in branch campus in the country of [Cutter 00:19:43] and a wide range of other programs with global reach but Jack would challenge us, his senior team. We have to have a strong center in order to have widening impact. We have to be able to not just lose ourselves in this centrifugal force, we have to come back to our center.

In Georgetown's case, it was its identity as a Catholic and Jesuit institution and is rooted in the nations capital in Washington D.C. and so even as we took on these big new things in Cutter or China, we also doubled down and tripled down on right at home. What does it mean to be a Catholic institution? What does it mean to serve the nation's capital? And I certainly know that Berkeley and Yale have taken those same approaches to digging deeper and recommitting to those core values. I think the Aspen Institute has actually down that in Aspen Colorado. It's critical that we always own as a nerve center, home base, our placement here where we were founded 70 years ago.

Carol Crist: Now, I agree with that but globalization is also a kind of soft power abroad. The United States has the finest higher education system in the world and that so many universities and governments come here to figure out how we did it is a wonderful way of maintaining American's power in a particularly constructive manner.

Peter Saliday: No, there are no better friends to America then students from somewhere else in the world who have had part of their education in the United States and then who go home.

Dan Porterfield: Yeah.

Carol Crist: Yeah.

Peter Saliday: And they tend to love the United States. Similarly, when our students do something aboard, they first of all become far more sophisticated about challenges that can only be solved globally and that's a good thing but they also, I think in a way, become more patriotic because they recognize what is special about the United States.

Facilitator: So I'm hearing a couple different ideas here about how to think about the global campus, a global university in an era that remains ... Of course campuses are placed somewhere, so one idea is that the learning environments when you bring a great diversity of people on the campus is more powerful learning

environment. Another idea is that you can somehow manage these centrifugal forces of fragmentation by having a set of programmatic initiatives in a place while also aspiring to communicate and disseminate knowledge to the world and third, this is an interesting one, American higher education is a form of soft power for the values of higher education, academic freedom and perhaps even, you didn't mention it but I'll hazard to put it on the table, democracy itself in the form of admiration for values of liberal democracy.

Peter Saliday: Exactly.

Facilitator: Okay so, I'm just gonna gently channel some of my relatives for a second here. People who would think, if I'm just an ordinary tax payer at Berkeley and my kids are never gonna get into the flagship campus at Berkeley and I hear about the fantastic power of the diverse learning environments on campus, but I'm partly on the hook for funding it through my tax payer dollars or I'm just an American citizen and I hear about how much 30 billion dollars, whatever the number was, that goes to research across institutions of higher education. Some of which go to Yale and I'm being told that one reason to support that is research is the global public good, it helps the entire globe.

I'm still feeling perhaps, channeling my relatives here, a bit skeptical. That's not enough of a value proposition for me, what about the opportunities for my kids which don't seem to have any place within these elite institutions and here of course I'm bringing up that description, elite quite deliberately 'cause places like Yale and Berkeley and dare I say the Aspen Institute, are almost paradigms of those elite institutions in society where people now have great skepticism.

Carol Crist: Well two things, first of all, the reason that so many state universities have increased their out of state and international populations is those students are subsidized in the educations of the in state students, so there's a very direct benefit to the in state students.

Facilitator: Financially no doubt that's true. My anecdotal experience is that the average citizen doesn't understand that financial cross subsidization. They think they're paying for the foreign kid on campus.

Dan Porterfield: Or it's possible even that people don't want us to be funded that way.

Facilitator: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan Porterfield: They want us to get our cost under control so if that's our primary reason for attracting international students, which is not of course, then why would they support that? Franklin and Marshall College did something pretty unique among small liberal arts colleges, maybe 20 years ago. We developed a talent strategy for recruiting international students, which includes giving 40 full scholarships a year to kids from all around the world. So there's 160 or so, students on my campus out of 2400 students, liberal arts school who are more or less fully

funded from us, and they're from every continent. And these students have really substantially lifted the academic quality of our classrooms, and the cross cultural nature of our community. Dramatic ways.

F and M interestingly became globally inclusive earlier than it became deeply domestically inclusive. And then in my time working at F and M when we developed a domestic talent strategy, interestingly the faculty were already so comfortable with the concept of cultural diversity and so ready to welcome students, seeing their backgrounds as a collection of assets that it was actually much easier perhaps, than people expected. When we tripled the percentage of domestic students of color and domestic students who were immigrants in a very short period of time, and the experience of a cross culture campus is part of why that happened.

Peter Saliday:

Yeah I do think private universities are in a little different position than publicly funded ones, although I think the single biggest threat right now in higher education is the lack of state support for their public universities. I really do. But I think private universities do have an obligation to take those gifts that are invested in endowments and grown, and channel as much as one can. Reasonably can through financial aid, to reduce the financial burden of families. Our financial aid policies are the same for domestic or international students where need blinded admission, meaning we take students regardless of their ability to pay and then we fill all need. How does that translate? So if you are anywhere on the income spectrum, let's just say U.S. for now, just make this easier, from the 0 percentile, the poorest person in the country to about the 95th percentile, right.

So anything other than the top 5%, you're gonna get something from Yale. And if you are in the first 50% of the income distribution, so half the country, from an income distribution point of view, you're gonna come to Yale if you're admitted with absolutely no cost to your family at all. The result is that 85% of our undergraduates are graduating with 0 debt and the larger issue here is people don't know it. And so they think a place like Yale, were Franklin and Marshall or Berkeley is not for them, right? And again, we have to do a better job I think, delivering this message. Just in the last five years we've seen 50% more students at Yale who are eligible for a [inaudible 00:27:36] Grant, so that means they're from families making 40000 or so dollars or less, and about a 50% increase in first generation students enrolling at Yale.

Those are students who are the first in their families to go to college and I know other colleges and universities also are putting enormous effort into funding the American dream. My grandparents were immigrants, they didn't go to school. My father's the only one of his generation who went, he became a professor ultimately so I had a very comfortable childhood with a professor father and a nurse mother but how did he do that? Well his parents trusted higher education to give him a great start, and where did he go? He went to Bronx High School of Science, which was free. He went to City University of New York, which was free

and then he did his graduate work at Harvard University and where he got a stipend and yet our family was transformed economically because my father got that education. And there are few places in the world where your family two generations ago can come on ships and sell dry goods on the lower east side, New York, that's what my grandparents did.

Facilitator: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Peter Saliday: And then the next generation can be a professor and the next generation can lead an ivy league university. You can't do that in many parts of the world. We have to make sure that you can continue to do that in this country.

Carol Crist: Yeah I wanted to share a fact about Berkeley though. I really love ... Berkeley's number one in the country and the percent of its graduates that came from families in the bottom 20% of U.S. income distribution ...

Peter Saliday: Fantastic.

Carol Crist: ... and wind up in the top 1%.

Facilitator: Right. I wanted to mention, Carol walked in, the first time I met her just 45 minutes ago wearing the Aspen name badge saying Carol on one side and then the other side for some reason, the name badge says Raj Chetty. He's my colleague at Stanford although he's moving now to Harvard, who's done exactly the research that Carol's just mentioning. This extraordinarily data intensive research to show what type of socioeconomic background is reflected on so many university campuses, and Berkeley shows up especially well in the studies.

Carol Crist: Though I wanted to make another point about numbers which I think gets us back to the question of trust. So if the 10 campuses of the University of California, one of which is a medical school so it's essentially irrelevant to what I'm gonna say, six of them had over 10000 applicants for places in their either freshmen or junior class 'cause we had met some of our students at the junior transfer level. When you have that kind of disproportion between applications and acceptances, it both erodes the sense of public trust and this is a public good but it also suggests that there is some complexity in this lack of public trust, people are really voting with their feet in these application numbers despite the survey data that says lack of trust [crosstalk 00:30:53].

Facilitator: I'd like to get one last topic of conversation and if it's okay, and it's all connected here so Dan if you wanted to get in whatever comment on this, I'm pretty sure you're gonna be able to do so and then open it up to the floor, part of the dynamic here about worries of elitism on college campuses seems to me to have something to do with the rise of populism. We've seen right wing populism and left wing populism for what's its worth. The idea just as you were describing, when I applied to Yale as an undergraduate I think there were 18000 applications for a class of around 2180 people, now 50000? Something like that?

Peter Saliday: 35000.

Facilitator: 10000 applications for one campus at Berkeley, it seems far more distant, more inaccessible just in the numbers. You hear what the acceptance rate is, the yield rate. I'm curious how you think about managing institutions of higher education and the age of rising populism where the skepticism is so rampant.

Dan Porterfield: I would say at a high level our institutions can't only simply say, "Let's go tell our story better." We have to go and create a new story by bringing more resources and more opportunity to communities that don't feel as if higher education has reached out to them. These institutions have, so this is not a comment about Berkeley or Yale. At Franklin and Marshall College, about seven years ago when I became president, we developed a national talent strategy to triple our financial aid budget and recruit kids from the full American mosaic to our campus but in doing that, we also said to ourselves we have to go deep into Pennsylvania, we can't just go to Miami and Houston and L.A. and the Bay area in Illinois, we have to get back into Pennsylvania. And so we did two things, we created something called the Pennsylvania College Advising Core through which our young graduates are providing college advising to more than 6000 kids across rural Pennsylvania.

Some of them come to F and M but frankly most of 'em go all over the place. And secondly we created a summer program called F and M College Prep, they brought kids from the whole country. Top kids to our campus for free courses with our faculty before their senior year but again, we made sure that there was an over representation of rural PA kids there. And from my young graduates working across the state of Pennsylvania in Trump country and from the kids themselves coming to our campus, what I'm seeing is a huge upside in opportunity for kids from all parts of America. Red, blue and purple, to mash it up together and create meaning together and fall in love with each other and believe that this is the greatest country but we have to know the kids. We have to get our hands on the kids. So that'd be my first sort opening comment to this, is bring our resources to the people.

Facilitator: And Peter, maybe you think about this too in your role as a social psychologist, how as a social psychologist or as a president of Yale do you think about populism and skepticism about ...

Peter Saliday: It's [inaudible 00:33:40]. I think resentment is probably the dominant emotion that underlies this, and it is true to the extent we tell our story better and people know that they can come to Yale and it won't cost them anything and then you reject 13 out of every 14 applications, right? That is a recipe for resentment. It's not easily solved, I think Dan's ideas about reaching out and joining with others and creating these networks and that help, is one way to do it. A second way ... We just expanded, we just said we're going to increase the number of students we take because that doesn't ... That still means a lot of

rejected applicants but right now it's 200 fewer rejected applicants a year who are coming and getting a great education so we expanded.

Carol Crist: Yeah our great system of public universities in this country, we're established by the Moral Act in 1862 and every state was given a land grant to found a public university and these universities were designed to educate the sons and daughters of farmers and factory workers and they were called People's Colleges and we have to make sure we're People's Colleges for the 21st century and that at least in California means expanding enrollment capacity.

Dan Porterfield: So one of the things that I've seen firsthand from our talent strategy is how many kids are out there at 16, 17 years old that have the talent to excel at top institutions like ours. They have the talent and I think that one of the open questions for us as a society is how do we build stronger bridges from college to high school to help strengthen high school curricula and to provide more vibrant pathways for kids to college opportunity? The thing I'm sure about because of my work at Franklin and Marshall College is that if you bring together high striving kids who are immigrants from Mexico, who are immigrants from Saudi Arabia or from Jordan, who are from Center City, Philadelphia, who are from rural Pennsylvania, you bring those kids together, they will create meaning and solutions and community that we who are older can perhaps only imagine.

Peter Saliday: The other issue is a kind of general belief by the public particularly American public, particularly in cities but really throughout the country ...

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:36:04]

Peter Saliday: ... particularly in cities, but really throughout the country, that even though there are 3500 or so colleges and universities in our country, there's only eight of them worth going to. Right? And that is something I think all of us as education leaders have to push against, right?

The top one percent of colleges and universities, if you don't mind me talking this way, that's already 35. The top 10%, that's 350. That's a lot of opportunity.

Dan Porterfield: I don't know if my board would support me, but I think the Aspen Institute should buy U.S. News and World Report and [inaudible 00:36:39] standards. Really!

Facilitator: Right. That's in the neighborhood of the idea that came up on the panel I was on earlier, which involved Jeff Bezos purchasing Twitter, and then taking several people off the platform.

Dan Porterfield: I wouldn't do that.

Facilitator: All right. Let's open the floor to questions from the audience. You'll note, as I open the floor to questions, that we haven't touched on a few topics which I'm

guessing are in your heads. Issues about free speech. Issues about the ways in which college campuses interact with the local communities. College protests and undergraduate activism. If you have those questions, by all means, bring them to the floor.

I see a hand right here. We'll start over here with you, sir. Give us your name and your question. That'd be great.

Jamie: Hi. My name is Jamie. I'm actually currently attending university. One of the problems I see is that there's a real obsession with return on investment, so if you're not majoring in something that's in STEM, people assume that, one, you're not really smart enough to do so, and two ... Excuse me. You're kind of throwing away your tuition, because you're never really going to get a high paying job. I was wondering if you guys could speak to that, and how you think it might be damaging the college system.

Peter Saliday: Yeah. I think it's a troubling dynamic. First of all, we don't know what the world of work is going to look like in 10, 20, 30 years. I think there probably is no better educational experience you can have than a broad liberal education, so that you can be a lifetime learner. You can think critically. You can communicate clearly ... for whatever the future brings us. Right? I think the uncertainty of the world of work is one of the best arguments for a liberal arts education.

I think the other problem is, and I hear it in your question. There's a bit of an obsession with measuring the value of an education in economic terms. So you hear a lot about the "college premium." If you have a college degree, you make a million dollars more a year than if you don't. And in fact, that number's growing. Right? The college premium is growing.

There's nothing wrong with doing that kind of search, and it's good to know those numbers, or whatever. But there's many other reasons to want to have a great educational experience, having to do with leading a meaningful life, and leading a purposeful life, that may be a little harder to measure in dollars.

Dan Porterfield: One of the great bodies of research is called ... I think it was the Bend in the River? Am I ...

Peter Saliday: Yeah. The-

Dan Porterfield: The Shape of the River.

Facilitator: Yeah, Shape of the River.

Peter Saliday: Shape of the River.

Carol Crist: Shape of the River.

Dan Porterfield: The Shape of the River. By Bill Bowen and Derek Bok, which showed that kids who received financial aid going into college, or kids who are from underrepresented groups, overwhelmingly brought out of their college experience a desire to serve the public good. Overwhelmingly. It's pretty interesting.

Facilitator: All right. Let's go over to this side. All the way in the back, with the white shirt, I believe. Yeah, right there.

Loren Walters: My name's ... was [inaudible 00:39:50] one?

Facilitator: Please go ahead, and then we'll move down to the person I was pointing to. But that's fine.

Loren Walters: My name is Loren Walters-

Facilitator: Oh, no. Not at all.

Loren Walters: My name is Loren Walters. The puzzle I would be interested in your commenting on is the low rates of completion in colleges. Two-year schools, four-year schools. Something less than 50% of students who start finish in five years. From a perspective of trust, and those students playing meaningful roles in the community that they came from, I think it's a huge issue. Putting aside the fact that only 30% of students in America, or people, have actually completed a college education.

Carol Crist: I agree that it's a huge issue for colleges and universities. It's probably not typical of ours. At Berkeley, completion rate is 93%. But I think that the emphasis has to shift from getting students into college to getting them to complete college, and that we should be thinking much more creatively than we have been about college completion programs. Taking individuals who have some college and enabling them to get that college degree.

Dan Porterfield: The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program is doing a lot of work on two-year colleges, and there's a lot that can be done to improve graduation rates. But a big one, the really important one, is to improve the quality of high school and make sure that more students are taking a full college prep curriculum on their pathway to college. Some states have really pushed that, and others have been slower. If students aren't getting a college prep curriculum, it's very difficult then to do college-level work.

One reason why two-year college graduates are so promising is because they've proven they can do college-level work. I think all of our schools are starting to look more at ways to connect with two-year colleges. I mean, Berkeley's already doing that in an intensive way, I think.

Carol Crist: Right.

Facilitator: Terrific. Okay. We'll come down here to the woman ... Yes, please.

Meredith: Hi. My name is Meredith [inaudible 00:41:46]. I worked at TIAA for a long time, which I'm sure you've heard of. We're a financial services for not-for-profits, and in particular higher ed.

Facilitator: Originally teacher pensions.

Meredith: Originally Teachers' Insurance and Annuities. That is still our legal name, by the way. Anyway, how do you ... going to the question over here ... How do you contrast what we're also hearing, and actually where I just came from, in the lecture before this about the skills gap ... the idea that a liberal education is dying? Is going to be extinct. And that everything now is going to coding, skills-based, a way to get a job as opposed to getting education?

A theory that I heard, and I actually heard it through a meeting we had with [Mackenzie 00:42:36], that's being espoused ... not by them, but by someone who brought it to them, that if you look out 20 years, you're going to see elite institutions like the ones you work for, and then you're going to see technical schools. That the average schools are simply not going to be able to sustain themselves.

Carol Crist: That's a really interesting question. There was a fascinating study that Google did of its workforce, in which they were looking at the level of success various employees had and their college major. They found out that so-called "liberal arts majors" were more successful, on the whole, than the employees that had had technical majors.

I think we're in a really interesting moment of transition, where certain technical skills are going to become as basic to education as, say, writing has been. But that doesn't mean that that's the whole of education. It is a tool, but critical thinking, understanding of perspectives other than your own, global sophistication, numerical fluency are also equally important.

Facilitator: If I could just insert here, as the moderator, taking just a note of permission, in thinking about the gentleman's question over here, who's the undergraduate, along with this idea about skills ... At Stanford, where I teach, in the past couple of years, it's now 40% of the undergraduate body is majoring in computer science. You might think that there's this huge economic payoff to it. The liberal arts aspiration of the university is being threatened.

Just as folks here were saying, and what I'd say to you over here, it seems like ... the "Techies" and the "Fuzzies," is what they call them at Stanford. The "techies" in STEM, and the "Fuzzies" in the humanities and social sciences. The idea here is that the advances in artificial intelligence are just as likely to put out of business the coders who work currently in getting these initial tools and skills, as it would be for someone driving a truck.

If you want to have a financial, or economic, reason to think about getting a liberal arts education, you would think about acquiring a portfolio of talents, of working in teams and collaboration, of having critical thinking skill. That you can pose questions to yourself, that then your tools can solve ... pose socially worthwhile questions.

Then there's just the hallowed tradition of a broad-based education, so that you can discover the things that are going to drive your interests over a long lifetime. Which given the economy, is almost certainly going to change.

It's an old truism now that no one graduating from Stanford, from Yale, from Berkeley, from F&M, is going to have the same employer for 50 years after the age of 21. So unless you're prepared for transition, which a liberal arts education is great at, directing your own learning over a long horizon, just harnessing skills for what the job market wants now is a recipe for your own extinction.

Dan Porterfield: [crosstalk 00:45:37]-

Carol Crist: There's a really interesting article by the Nobel Prize-winning chemist Tom Cech, in which he ... He went to a liberal arts college. He went to Grinnell. This article is a statistical analysis of the number of scientific leaders that went to liberal arts colleges. And he hypothesizes that a liberal arts education is really important for scientists, not because you get cultured scientists who really like to go to the opera and read novels, but that they're better scientists because they're used to changing their frame of reference with the different kinds of methodologies and assumptions of different disciplines.

Dan Porterfield: I developed a informal PhD in clinical psychology of talking to parents about their children's career choices at at Franklin and Marshall college. And any of you are welcome to sign up, if you like, for a session. One of the things that I really came to see is that when students follow their curiosity, follow what excites them and interests them ... No limits.

Peter Saliday: Great things happen.

Dan Porterfield: Great things happen.

Facilitator: Let's take one more question from this side of the room. Let's go all the way there in the back.

Speaker 1: [inaudible 00:46:47].

Facilitator: I can't see very well. Hand the mic to whomever you like.

Dr. Kathy Klug: Hi. Dr. Kathy Klug from the college counselor here at Aspen High School, for 25 years. A couple of observations that I just want to ask you to consider. Two

things. I have kids who have graduated from our high school at all of your institutions, very happily, but I also have a lot who can't access your institutions.

The first thing I would say is somehow get married to our junior college system, our community college system, in a much more aggressive way that says, "Yale holds 300 places open, junior year, for junior college transfers." You would get kids taking their first two years, as an access, that Stanford will hold 500 places, and that Berkeley already holds them. I commend you, Berkeley. Franklin and Marshall, same thing. Small liberal arts education is unavailable to our kids who need to start at the junior college for economic reasons and academic depth.

The second thing I would say is, as sophisticated as we are today, we're a rural community, and many people get to the table to discuss with you what they need. The rurals are left out. So good for you, Franklin and Marshall, for going to the rural part of Pennsylvania. We're the rural part of Colorado, so don't forget your rurals. They need a voice at the table.

And the third thing I'd like to say-

Facilitator: [crosstalk 00:48:27] too much ... If I can hold ... We've only got a couple of minutes. I want to give everyone a chance. The two questions is good enough for now. If you want to come up and ask another one in a minute.

Dr. Kathy Klug: Okay, third thing is the working poor is way more affluent than you're giving them credit for. They're two people working hard, making \$100,000, and they have no financial access to your colleges in a meaningful way. Those are my three points.

Facilitator: Thank you. Give each of you a chance for a final word here.

Peter Saliday: So very quickly, since we're almost out of time. I think all of us are looking at community college transfers as a wonderful source of students. The numbers you mentioned are much bigger than the numbers that are true of my institution, but our numbers are bigger than they used to be. I think it is a way of creating access.

It's not ... for a place like Yale, or Princeton, or Stanford, or Harvard, it's not a financial issue, because they're going to get a full ride. It's rather getting the education that they can get in a community college setting, and then be able to complete their education at a four-year college.

Facilitator: Carol?

Carol Crist: I want to encourage your advocacy for higher education. You're influencers. You're well-connected. Just spread the word in all of your worlds and social communities.

Dan Porterfield:

I'll just add two quick things. One is that ... and they're both Aspen Institute sort of answers. One is that tomorrow, our College Excellence Initiative is releasing a new study on community college transfer rates, in which we're going to be able to show exactly your point: that there are something like 50,000 graduates of two-year colleges every year, who have proven they can do the work at a four-year college, and show really great results when they transfer.

The second thing is that two years ago, the Aspen Institute, with Bloomberg Philanthropies, created something called the American Talent Initiative, precisely because our three institutions could each open the doors to a certain group. A few more, dozens of more, hundreds of more Pell Grant students, but we couldn't deal with that enormous national number.

So what we did together, and our three institutions were three of the founding members, is we set a national goal that we want to have 50,000 more Pell Grant students sustainably enrolled in any of the 300 schools that have 70% graduation rates around the country. And that we invited schools to come in, if they were committed to enrolling more of exactly the students you're talking about. And Berkeley and Yale were among the first two to join with Franklin and Marshall. We now, today, have 105 schools that have committed to that national goal, including the entire Ivy League, and a number of public flagship institutions.

I hope that what you hear from this row here is that we get that you're right on point. Where real lives are at stake, and real futures can be created. And that your students deserve the opportunity to go to college and pursue the greatness inside of them. I hope this American Talent Initiative is one way, not the only way, but one way to respond to your question.

Facilitator:

Will you please join me in thanking our distinguished panel.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:51:40]