



Higher Ground: Ethics and Leadership in the Modern University

Nannerl O. Keohane

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Nannerl O. Keohane is one of the most widely respected leaders in higher education. A political theorist who served as President of Wellesley College and Duke University, she has firsthand knowledge of the challenges facing modern universities: rising costs, the temptations of “corporatization,” consumerist students, nomadic faculty members, and a bewildering wave of new technologies. Her views on these issues and on the role and future of higher education are captured in *Higher Ground*, a collection of speeches and essays that she wrote over a twenty-year period.

Keohane regards colleges and universities as intergenerational partnerships in learning and discovery, whose compelling purposes include not only teaching and research but also service to society. Their mission is to equip students with a moral education, not simply preparation for a career or professional school.

But the modern era has presented universities and their leadership with unprecedented new challenges. Keohane worries about access to education in a world of rising costs and increasing economic inequality, and about threats to academic freedom and expressions of opinion on campus. She considers diversity as a key educational tool in our increasingly pluralistic campuses, ponders the impact of information technologies on the university’s core mission, and explores the challenges facing universities as they become more “global” institutions, serving far-flung constituencies while at the same time contributing to the cities and towns that are their institutional homes.

Reflecting on the role of contemporary university leaders, Keohane asserts that while they have many problems to grapple with, they will find creative ways of dealing with them, just as their predecessors have done.

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