THE

CHANGING ECOLOGY

OF US HIGHER EDUCATION

Mitchell Stevens, Stanford University
@ National Louis University
1 October 2015
ecology

“relationship between a group of living things and their environment.”
relationship between a group of living things and their environments.

- local
- national
- global
overview

1. three epochs of US higher education
2. why delivering higher education is harder now than ever before
3. where US higher education is headed
4. why now is a great time to be in higher education
THREE EPOCHS
of US higher education
associational

- colonial era forward
- entrepreneurial anarchy
  - multiple incentives to build schools
  - no national or inherited monopoly
  - growing population and expanding frontier
- associations specify identity and enable cooperation in a complicated ecology
national service

- World Wars I, II, and Cold War
- higher education provides:
  - technical and managerial knowledge
  - reward and accommodation for veterans
  - arsenal to fight for geo-political supremacy
  - an American style of welfare
- schools as servants/arms of government
market

• latter decades of 20th century
• gradual erosion of government support for basic infrastructure
• unabated cost/price escalation in tuition
market

- transfer of costs to students and families
- ever more national/transnational flows of students
- new entrants into the ecology
2 why it’s HARDER NOW than ever
why it’s harder now than ever

• the epochs are cumulative—we now have all three simultaneously
• can’t rely on steady funding from government sources
• need to be both service- and market-oriented
• need to operate locally, nationally, and globally
where we’re HEADED
where we’re headed

• life-long learning
• multiple, hybrid learning platforms
• imperative to measure learning and tangible returns
• expectation of lower unit costs/prices
• ever more competition
4 why now is a GOOD TIME
why now is a good time

• life-long learning !
• multiple, hybrid learning platforms !
• emphasis on learning !
• opportunity to measure learning and degree returns !
• expectation of lower unit costs/prices !
• ever more demand !
learn more at

Stanford’s Year of Learning | vptl.stanford.edu/year-learning

Education’s Digital Future | edf.stanford.edu

Stanford Lytics Lab | lytics.stanford.edu