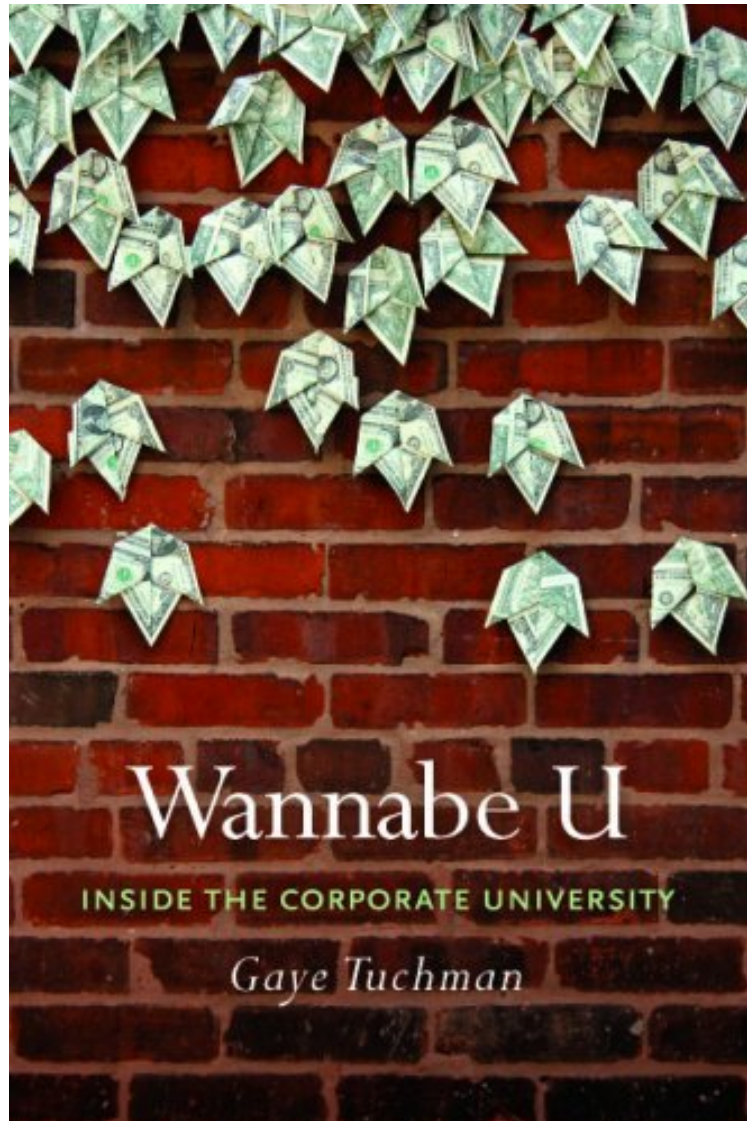


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## Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University

*Gaye Tuchman*

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**Gaye Tuchman : Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. What We Could All BecomeBy Richard B. SchwartzThis is an interesting book, interesting in large measure because it is so different. The book purports to be a case study of an anonymous, public, research university that is being `transformed' by corporatist presidential leadership. The study, however, is presented in narrative form, with personal details of the major players, comments from `interviewees' and so on. Our initial impulse is to see the book as a satire on current managerial practices and the ways in which they are making our universities more `accountable' but also more corporate, more `efficient' but also more empty, more

'fiscally responsible' but also less academic and more putatively responsive to customers (the individuals formerly known as students) but actually striking Faustian bargains with them. The leaders in this gray new world are job-jumping opportunists, glad-handing centralizers, individuals who would be unrecognizable to the generations of academics who were, first and foremost, members of the faculty, proud of their teaching and proud of their research, "doing administration" as a duty or a penance but always attempting to focus on core functions rather than mouthing corporatist cant. The more we read, however, the more it seems as if this is not so much a thinly-veiled satire on current practices, as embodied in a single example (most likely the University of Connecticut) as it is an actual documentary. One might also say a 'mockumentary', except for the fact that there is little exaggeration here. Everything which the author recounts is entirely plausible. Indeed, it is all quite familiar. This is the way things often now are. The question is, why? The book offers good answers. With the dramatic erosion of state funding for public education universities have adjusted. They have raised tuition. They have taken in more foreign students and out-of-state students, who pay full, higher tuition. They have invested heavily in big-time athletics, both to attract attention and provide entertainment. They have done all in their power to increase grant funding and, where possible, patent income. They have developed corporate partnerships. They have raised money through billion-dollar development campaigns. They have erected massive bureaus providing 'student services', built athletic facilities with rock walls and other emoluments, provided bandwidth for the downloading of music and film and they have shaped their institutions in such a way as to maximize their opportunities for enhanced ratings in USNews and the National Academy's ten year (fifteen year- most recently) surveys of graduate programs. As a result the book is unlike any Swiftian satire or Christopher Guest mockumentary, because it is unrelievedly sad. There is an occasional smile of recognition but no laughter here. Fortunately, all public universities are not quite like this yet. They may share the same problems and they may be forced to utilize the same strategies to develop revenue streams, but some portions of their academic souls have remained intact. At this point the pendulum for 'running the university like a business' and being more 'accountable' has not finished its swing. We are at the point where many voices, both academic and populist, are raising cries of alarm. When students and parents recognize that the current corporate university requires too many academic sacrifices and, ultimately, does not serve students well, the pendulum will swing back. At least it is pretty to think so.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Review from a low-level student services grunt at a Wannabe U. By John Lee Grogan Jr. I have invested (wasted?) a large portion of my life in the educational establishment and have been baffled and bewildered by what I have seen and experienced in over a decade of working in almost daily contact with college students. This book gives me some pieces of the puzzle to make sense of it all, a bit of a decoding book to help me decipher the code of upper administration if you will. The most striking sentences out of this entire book are to be found on page 151 - "It's not about teaching; it's about looking like you care about the students, a social scientist said. Like much else in contemporary life, the emphasis is on appearances. I observed a small class in which the instructor claimed that a new central administrator was trying to do something about student partying and drinking "because he cares about students and drinking is dangerous." A young woman immediately spoke up: "They (administrators) don't care about us," she insisted. "They just want to give the appearance of caring. They don't care about us at all." This is NOT the primary focus of the book, but it's such a huge theme which permeates all of American society, I call it "The Illusion of Care." This student is entirely correct, I work at a Wannabe U. in Texas and I get the sense that the university is in the business of not education students, but rather processing them through the grinder as efficiently as possible. Students are files, numbers, accounts, objects and are secretly held in deep disdain by administrators and too many professors. This leads to another theme I have seen too, I'll call it institutional sadism which manifests itself in disrespect and mistreatment of students. I took a class from a prominent scholar in the field of College Student Personnel Administration, Dr. George D. Kuh and remember I had written something about the inherent conflict between the needs of the institution and those of the student to which I had a thick, red response correcting me that there WAS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO NEEDS. That is an illusion Dr. Kuh, you don't know what you're talking about sir. I liked when the author talks about a mechanistic bureaucracy with its emphasis on "efficiency, effectiveness, and centralized control." This is an accurate description of today's research institutions, I've worked at four of them now and they're all the same really and their aim is the same, uniformity, control, eradication of individual expression and thought, obedience and submission to authority/the expert/your superior/ your boss. I see so much mindless and soulless busy work, it's as if the collection, measurement and assessment of data is more important than what it is indicating we should do. As another former professor stated, "All motion, and no action." Pure busy work which wears one down. I picked up on this sense of weariness in the writer, she just seemed kinda beat down and that's the aim. To obey and act, to follow the rules without questioning the orders of if what you're doing has any purpose or meaning. It's about making the number "look good." It's about knowing how to play the game, without ever exposing the unstated rules and logic. John Taylor Gatto, a very vocal critic of secondary education speaks to this when he talks about the fourth purpose of higher education which is to deliver to the state a docile and obedient citizen, deliver to industry a standardized, compliant cog in the machine that's been properly conditioned (this is called workforce development), to deliver to the economy insatiable and mindless consumers. My day to day experience confirms this, it's like cattle being herded through the gates. Yes, the market

logic, has indeed infiltrated higher education, and like other corporations, higher education is not only run as a business, it's run as a dishonest business. It is run like a monopoly and the students are captive consumers. I see that what the real purpose of education has is that they have a monopoly on the credentialing process; in essence they have a monopoly even on supposed life success and they are going to bleed students dry for every penny they can get from them based on the perceived value of that degree. At one point, universities operated under a principle known as "in loco parentis" which means "in place of a parent." Just as in the financial world where there's supposed to be a fiduciary relationship, one based on trust and looking after the well being of your client, I still feel that there SHOULD be a relationship of trust involved here. Parents and students are assuming that the institutions ARE acting in their interests, because universities still sell themselves this way. but my direct experience has shown me that the institutions are not worthy or respect, they have abdicated responsibility for the growth and development of young minds, if they ever did that in the first place, for economic gain. It is a sick, sick, sick system and I need to find another job because I do not work for honest and ethical people and I feel students are being actually harmed by their experience here in the educational machine. The system is not set up for the benefit of the system, the students exist to perpetuate the mindless, soulless meat grinder. Let somebody else grind the crank, it makes me want to weep when I see all the wasted talent and potential. To close out this review, the author cites Robert Birnbaum on her inside flap - "an educational philosopher might claim that those things of greatest importance are precisely those things that cannot be measured...If we cannot measure what is valuable, we will come to value what is measurable." And folks, this is EXACTLY where we are at today. 23 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Conforming to mediocrity By B. Davies This is a wonderfully perceptive (if dispiriting) examination of how public universities are scrambling to conform to a simplistic and untested "market model" of excellence that in actuality kills curricular diversity, critical thinking, and self-governance. Tuchman is especially good on the rise of an auditing culture that pretends to be about monitoring student success and retention but actually aims at Taylorizing teaching and deprofessionalizing the professoriate. If you work at a second-tier public university and your administration is talking about "transforming" itself to better prepare students for the job market and establish a "flagship" reputation, read this book immediately!

Based on years of observation at a large state university, Wannabe U tracks the dispiriting consequences of trading in traditional educational values for loyalty to the market. Aping their boardroom idols, the new corporate administrators at such universities wander from job to job and reductively view the students there as future workers in need of training. Obsessed with measurable successes, they stress auditing and accountability, which leads to policies of surveillance and control dubiously cloaked in the guise of scientific administration. In this eye-opening exposeacute; of the modern university, Tuchman paints a candid portrait of the corporatization of higher education and its impact on students and faculty. Like the best campus novelists, Tuchman entertains with her acidly witty observations of backstage power dynamics and faculty politics, but ultimately Wannabe U is a hard-hitting account of how higher education's misguided pursuit of success fails us all.

"This book raises important questions about what kind of higher education we want. Tuchman is passionately engaged, but never loses her sense of humour and leaves us with much to think about." (Times Higher Education)"About the Author Gaye Tuchman is professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut. She is the author of Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality and Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers, and Social Change, editor of The TV Establishment: Programming for Power and Profit, and coeditor of Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media.