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Brothers and OU professors team up for book on education

By Eric Reikowski, media relations assistant

Academia is a family affair for Oakland University professors Greg and Tom Giberson. The brothers recently co-edited "The Knowledge Economy Academic and the Commodification of Higher Education," a collection of essays offering diverse perspectives on the many changes impacting higher education.

Released earlier this year by Hampton Press, the book draws on the expertise of 17 professors from colleges and universities around the globe and addresses a range of topics, from the history of higher education to its current perception as primarily an engine of economic advancement.

According to Greg, the idea for the book came about as he and his brother pondered various issues facing higher education today.

"We realized that, although there are many books about how higher education is changing, there are very few intellectual conversations out there that interrogate those changes from the perspective of individual faculty members," he explained.

Initial efforts to get the project off the ground proved less than fruitful. After emailing their proposal to about 1,000 university faculty members from across the country without a single response, the pair decided to try a different approach. They distributed their proposal to several Web-based communities, including TomorrowsProfessor.com, an online forum for academics to discuss higher education issues. Those outreach efforts generated more than 50 responses, many of them from educators outside the country, Greg recalled.

"It became obvious to us that interest in this book went beyond national borders," said Greg. "From there, we worked with the 17 selected proposal authors to craft chapters that fit our vision for the book, along with our own chapter that briefly surveys the historic role of higher education in society, along with our take on critical challenges facing higher education, and by extension, the societies we serve."

This was the first professional project the brothers worked on together and both consider it a success. In fact, the two recently delivered a presentation on the book at Cal Poly Pomona University and appeared as guests on "Hot Talk with Dorothy Willis," a television talk show that features interviews with scholars from around the globe.

"Even though we are in very different fields, we had been talking about doing some sort of project together since graduate school," said Greg, an assistant professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Oakland. "We are currently working on a proposal for an Honors College course at OU on the issues laid out in the book."

Tom, who is an associate professor of Education in Oakland's Human Resource Development program, enjoyed the experience of working with his brother.

"Thus far in my career, this project has been the most rewarding, both personally and professionally," said Tom, adding that he hopes the book will influence the direction of higher education in the United States and abroad.

"Most nations' societal values are moving higher education away from developing critical thinking, well-rounded, free and enlightened citizens, and instead, are demanding we produce workers and consumers," he explained. "In the short run, it may be 'good for business,' but in the long run, it seems detrimental to the values that underlie a truly free and fair society."



Brothers and OU professors Tom and Greg Giberson edited a book on education together.

SUMMARY

OU professors and brothers Greg and Tom Giberson co-edited a collection of essays offering diverse perspectives on the many changes impacting higher education.

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