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How English Universities Could Learn from the American Higher Education System



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About the author

Sir Cyril Taylor GBE is the founder and chairman of the American Institute for Foreign Study, founded in 1964, which is now the largest worldwide organiser of cultural exchange programmes with 30,000 students from 100 countries each year participating in its various programmes. He also serves as Chancellor of Richmond, the American International University in London.

He was an adviser on City Technology Colleges, specialist schools and academies to ten successive British Education Secretaries from 1997 to 2007. He founded the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust in 1987 and served as its Chairman until 2007. The Trust now has 5,000 affiliated schools worldwide.

His new book, *A Good School for Every Child*, was published by Routledge in March 2009.

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How English Universities Could Learn from the American Higher Education System

Sir Cyril Taylor GBE

It is a paradox that Britain has used two important United States school reforms: Magnet Schools (specialist schools in Britain) and Charter Schools (academies and City Technology Colleges in Britain) to great effect and has had much greater success with these two initiatives than has been the case in the United States.

Today 90% of all English secondary schools are either specialist or academies and in the last 10 years alone, standards in our schools have increased by more than a third. By contrast, many American publicly funded secondary schools, especially in urban areas such as New York and Washington DC, are generally accepted to have low standards, with less than half of US students graduating from high schools in some urban school districts ¹.

However, it is generally accepted that American universities and colleges offer a high standard of higher education with wider choices and diversity and greater market discipline than those in Britain. Why is this so? For example, participation rates are much greater in the United States than in Britain. Only 44% of British school leavers matriculate in a degree granting university.

By contrast, it is estimated that 53% of the US population have some form of higher post-secondary education, with 39% of the

age group obtaining an Associate (two year) degree or higher. Overall, 27% of the population in the United States has a Bachelors degree (4 year) of which approximately 10% have a graduate degree as well. These numbers are net of drop outs.

We do, of course, have many outstanding universities in the UK, especially the 20 members of the Russell Group, of which 15 rank in the top 100 universities in the world, but their numbers compared with the number of leading US universities are much smaller than the difference in total population would warrant – 300 million population in the USA versus 60 million in the UK. In total there are more than 7,000 accredited institutions of higher education in the United States compared with just 169 higher education degree awarding institutions in the UK, of which only 130 are universities, plus 376 further education colleges.

Why is the American higher education system so successful despite the difficulties at school level in many urban areas, and could British universities benefit from using some of the US techniques?

This paper analyses the differences in the two systems and makes recommendations on how British universities could benefit from adopting many of the American system's techniques.

¹ 14 out of the top 50 urban districts including New York City and Washington DC have a graduation rate from high school of less than half.

Summary of recommendations

- Generally US universities are much more independent of state control than their British counterparts, which in many respects are micro-managed by the former Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (now merged with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills), with a similar problem for further education colleges. It is therefore strongly recommended that British universities and further education colleges be given greater control over their finances including the right to set tuition fees, the numbers of students they enrol and their particular educational focus. It is unacceptable that British universities have their numbers capped by the government both generally and by subject. However, in return for this greater freedom, universities would need to provide to prospective students information on drop-out rates, the proportion of students on financial aid, applications to places ratios and their financial status, so that students could exercise their choice of institution on an informed basis. In addition, English universities and further education colleges would need to improve their own management structures to ensure they are run efficiently and do not operate at a deficit.
- There is far greater diversity of choice in the United States with four major types of institutions including 2-year community colleges, state universities, private colleges and private universities both non-profit and profit making, whereas here in Britain we just have universities and further education colleges. It was clearly a mistake to require the original polytechnics to convert into universities rather than allowing them to find their own identity as independent institutions. In the United States many prestigious colleges focus on teaching their students rather than on research. The diversity of choice, together with credit transfer and more financial independence means there is a genuine market discipline functioning with students being able to choose from a much wider range of higher education institutions and to change institutions if they are dissatisfied. It is strongly recommended that we encourage the establishment of new types of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom with their own degree awarding powers with a particular focus on improving the status of further education colleges.
- A significant proportion of American students finance their higher education costs by working part-time, yet these students are still eligible for financial aid, including Federal loans. In the United Kingdom, there is discrimination in the loans systems against part-time and mature students who come back into higher education
- One of the greatest advantages of the American system is the system of accountability through accreditation by the regional accrediting bodies and other accrediting bodies and as a result, the ability for students to transfer credits earned from one institution to another. Britain used to have an active Credit Accumulation Transfer Scheme among the former polytechnics administered by the old Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). Sadly, although such a scheme still exists, its use is not great and the Russell Group of Universities in most cases do not accept credits earned at other universities. It is strongly recommended that the American credit transfer

system be introduced into British universities with a particular goal being to empower more further education colleges to award degrees.

- Many American universities rely upon private sector support which over the years has led to leading universities accumulating substantial endowments which are used to fund financial aid for students and for new capital building projects. It is not only private Ivy League universities such as Harvard, Yale and Princeton which have large endowments, but public institutions such as the University of Kansas, which has an endowment of one billion dollars, mainly provided by alumni since the university was founded in the nineteenth century. While progress is now being made by some British universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, much more needs to be done to encourage private support of British Universities, especially by alumni.

- As Conor Ryan, Tony Blair's former education adviser said in a recent blog post, the splitting of the old Education and Skills Department into two departments – the Department for Children, Schools and Families, responsible for schools, and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) – has not been a success. It is, for example, very difficult to coordinate the proposed new National Diplomas if responsibility is split between two departments, particularly on links between schools and FE colleges. There has now been a further change as the DIUS has been merged into the new Business, Innovation and Skills Department, headed by Lord Mandelson. It is strongly recommended that universities and further education colleges be moved back into a combined Education Department.

The key differences between the British and American systems

Much greater diversity of choice for students

There are more than 7,000 accredited institutions of higher education in the United States including two-year community colleges and for-profit institutions, compared with just 169 higher education institutions in the UK which have the right to award degrees, plus 376 further education colleges funded by the Higher Education Funding Council. American higher education institutes offer a very wide choice of different types of post-secondary education.

Community colleges – There are about 1,000 American public two-year colleges offering remedial high school education, skills training and the Associate of Arts degrees, plus a further 150 independent community colleges. They are usually state-funded and have low fees of approximately \$2400 a year. Crucially, students who acquire the two-year associate degree and maintain an acceptable grade point average may be able to transfer up to 60 credits to a four-year college (see below for a description of the US credit system). However, admission to a particular four-year institution is not guaranteed in all cases when transferring from a community college.

The ability to transfer credits to a four-year institution depends on a number of factors, including whether the institutions have an articulation agreement.

For example, Foothills Community College in San Jose, California, regularly transfers some

of its AA (Associate of Arts) graduates to the University of California in Berkeley with two years' full credit towards the four-year UC Berkeley degree.

Generally it is easier to transfer credits between public institutions located in the same state. Provided the student completes the appropriate course for his or her major, and all 60 credits transfer, a student would only have to study a further two years to earn a BA or BS undergraduate degree which requires 120 units of credits, usually composed of 10 courses a year each with 3 units of credit, which typically offers 3 hours a week of instruction over a 15-week semester. However, in the United States, the average amount of time a student who begins post-secondary education at a community college and then transfers to a four-year college take to complete his degree is six years. By contrast, few of our further education colleges have degree awarding powers and their per capita funding is lower.

Public colleges and universities – Every US state has at least one public university and the largest states have more than thirty public colleges and universities. Annual fees, including tuition, room and board are typically for an in-state student approximately \$14,333 a year, equivalent to about £9,500. Some of these universities are rated very highly. For example, the University of California at Berkeley ranks twenty-first in the national university ratings published annually by the US News and World Report study, and ranks first among public universities. The average institutional grant a public four-year institution receives covers between 16% and 18% of tuition and fees. Average in-state tuition is \$6,600, but if all fees, including room and board are included, that number increases

to \$14,333 for in-state students. The average cost for an out-of-state student to attend a public university or college is \$25,200 but tuition rates and fees vary considerably within states, among states and across regions in the US. There are an estimated 1,000 public four-year institutions.

Private non-profit colleges – There are several hundred private four-year undergraduate colleges in the United States, many of which, such as Amherst, Emory and Vassar, rate very highly. Tuition fees are often as high as almost \$40,000 a year and can be as much as \$50,000, but typically, the higher priced colleges give scholarships equivalent to a third of their fees. The average annual tuition/room/board for private non profit colleges is \$31,229.

Private non-profit universities – Finally, there are an estimated 2,400 private universities offering both undergraduate and post-graduate courses earning professional degrees such as law or business, or doing research. Such leading universities as Harvard, Yale and Princeton (three of the so-called Ivy League schools among others) rate very highly in world rankings. Tuition can be as high as almost \$40,000 a year and as much as \$50,000 including room, board and fees, but again, there are substantial scholarships available, averaging 24% to 29% of tuition and fees. Indeed, institutions such as Harvard, which have large endowments, offer free tuition to those with no financial resources. In addition, Harvard has recently expanded its financial aid offerings and started a trend among high-ranking colleges and universities to provide even more financial aid to their students, including free tuition for low-income families, and in some instances, extensive new financial aid programmes for even upper middle

class families. Average tuition/room/board for private non-profit universities is \$41,560.

However, it should be noted that at the nation's most selective colleges and universities, only 3% of students come from the bottom income quartile and only 10% come from the bottom half of the income scale. Almost three quarters come from families in the top quartile.

Private for-profit institutions – In recent years, the scale and scope of for-profit higher education in the US has changed considerably, accounting today for more than 20% of all private higher education enrolments – ranging from non-degree programmes to doctoral programmes in about 700 institutions. Full-time enrolment in four-year for-profits continues to increase. A few institutions are very large, foremost the University of Phoenix, approaching 400,000 enrolments – the largest private university in the United States. Tuition and fees at for-profit institutions average \$13,046.

Although many for-profit institutions of higher education have national accreditation rather than regional accreditation, several of the large for-profit schools have sought and received regional accreditation. Most are eligible to compete for federal and state funds, including federal grants and subsidised student loans. Some for-profit institutions are doing so well financially that they have created their own loan programmes that enable them to lend directly to their students.

Credit transfer

Students studying at US institutions who move to other institutions can usually trans-

fer their earned credits. Generally, credits can be transferred if they were obtained at a regionally accredited institution, the student maintained a sufficient grade point average, the courses are considered of sufficiently high quality, they are comparable to courses at the receiving institution, and are determined to be applicable to the programme of study for which the student has applied. Transfer evaluation is an ongoing process that can last through an entire first semester at the new institution. While there is still the Credit Accumulation Transfer (CAT) scheme operating between the former polytechnics in the UK which are now universities, the Russell Group of Universities generally do not give credit towards their own degrees to students who studied elsewhere, even at other Russell Group universities and certainly not for study at further education colleges. US institutions now also give credit for study abroad at recognised universities. This has led to a doubling in the past five years of the number of US students studying abroad each year and earning credit towards their US degrees – a much greater proportion than for British university students. The total number of US students studying abroad is now 200,000 a year.

Together with the diversity of choice and funding arrangements, the US credit transfer system ensures a genuinely competitive market system in US higher education. If a student is not satisfied by his or her courses at a particular university, he or she can transfer to another institution and take their Federal funding with them. No such market exists in the UK.

Appendix 1 shows the guidelines on credit transfer for Richmond, The American International University in London.

Accreditation

Colleges and universities are accredited in the United States by one of a number of recognised but private accrediting organisations. Some organisations accredit degree programmes while others accredit non-degree vocational and certificated programmes. These are private, non-governmental organisations created for the specific purpose of reviewing higher education institutions and programmes for quality. Specifically the United States Department of Education recognises eight regional accreditation bodies which accredit most of the leading universities. It also recognises national institutional and specialised accrediting bodies. Finally, the US Secretary of Education recognises state agencies for the approval of public post-secondary vocational education and nurse education.

Initial requirements for a new institution to be accredited by one of the regional accreditation bodies are very rigorous and can take as long as five years to achieve. Once accredited, each university and college in the United States has to apply for reaccreditation every ten years. This is usually a very demanding process involving preparation of a massive self-study document setting goals for improvement over the next ten years and reviewing progress made over the previous ten years.

After the application for accreditation or reaccreditation has been submitted, an evaluation team usually consisting of up to eight members who are either university presidents or departmental heads and accreditation and state licensing authority staff, visit the university or college for a week, during which time they interview senior staff, trustees and students, and attend classes. If weaknesses are perceived, institutions are put on probation

and can subsequently lose their accreditation which usually leads to closure.

Even when universities or colleges have had their accreditation renewed, which is generally the case, their reaccreditation report will include recommendations for improvement. For example, when Richmond, The American International University in London had its accreditation reaffirmed by Middle States in 1996, the University was told to improve its library service. As a result, Richmond invested in a new library which was highly commended when the next accreditation visit took place in 2006.

In addition to the requirement to be accredited, US institutions must also be licensed to award degrees by the state higher education licensing body, of which there are 50 – one for each state. These bodies have specific degree awarding criteria and monitor each of their institutions' financial status, including audits and reports. Institutions operating at a deficit can have their license to award degrees withdrawn.

It is true, however, that standards at US universities vary, with some state and private universities in particular areas not having a high reputation. However, the difference in standards is not nearly as great as between British universities.

The accreditation system for the 169 British degree awarding institutions in the UK is not nearly as rigorous as it is in the United States. Of the 130 recognised universities, about 30 award degrees under a royal charter, which rarely, if ever, is withdrawn.

Other institutions are reviewed periodically by the Higher Education Qualifications Assurance Authority, (QAA) which demands high standards from institutions. However, the system

is not as formalised as in the USA. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings do, however, rate British universities as the second best after American universities.

There will be little support for a national credit transfer scheme in the United Kingdom as long as there continues to be such a large difference in academic standards between our universities, and that is why changes to the current accountability system are necessary so that more institutions achieve good standards of teaching. However, as part of the reform of the accreditation system, the process should be done by bodies that are independent of state control with the encouragement of competition between different types of accrediting bodies. There is of course much accreditation currently undertaken in the UK which demonstrates the ability of independent bodies to take on this role. For example, professional bodies and AMBA² accredit particular courses or university departments and schools. However, systems of accreditation could be more widespread.

Direct funding of students with universities setting their fee levels

The United States Federal Government provides Pell grants (dependent on a student's family income) and other federal grants and loans directly to US students and/or their parents at both private and public colleges and universities, but universities and colleges generally set their own fee levels.

State universities are also directly funded by their state based on a number of factors, including in part, on a per capita basis. This provides an incentive for institutions

to increase enrolment and to retain students. Unfortunately, current state budget shortfalls and huge deficits are having a significant detrimental impact on public institutions of higher education, which are reducing state appropriations to higher education and could mean enrolment caps, community college closures, cuts in financial aid, and a decline in services. For example, the California State University System recently announced that it plans to cap enrolment for the fall 2009 semester, and could turn away as many as 10,000 new students because it does not have the financial resources to handle them.

In addition, students' tuition fees are being driven up. The share of educational costs represented by student tuition rose from just over one third in 2002 to nearly half at public four-year institutions in 2006. At public research universities, almost all revenue from student tuition increases were used to offset revenue losses from other sources, primarily state appropriations.

American students frequently work part-time while studying even on a full-time basis. I myself, together with two other students, ran the campus newspaper service at Harvard Business School in 1960 whilst studying for our MBA degree. We earned a substantial portion of our fees in this way.

The need for students to work to contribute to the cost of their education has been a contributing factor to a trend among college students in the United States to take longer to achieve a Bachelor's degree. Although traditionally a Bachelor's degree has been completed in four years, on average students are taking longer to complete their degrees with the average time now being five years.

² Association of MBAs.

The competition among American private universities and colleges to attract the most able students is intense, leading to substantial discounting of fees through the award of scholarships to gifted students.

By contrast, the British Government limits the fees for English universities to a maximum of £3,000 per student payable by all students. Moreover, these highly favourable and modest fee levels are also available to students coming from the European Union. This is a poor deal for the British taxpayer since while 112,000 European Union students come to study in the United Kingdom each year, a much smaller number of British students attend EU universities. In addition, 230,000 foreign students enrol from countries outside the European Union, equivalent to 8% of the total 2.3 million in higher education. They contribute £1.7 billion to our universities in tuition fees paying much greater fees than are charged to either British or European Union students.

A recent report by Sir John Chisholm³ includes the below table which compares the tuition fees charged by British universities with those charged by US institutions.

Average annual undergraduate fees (not including board and lodging)

US private (average)

\$25,143 equivalent to about £16,000

US public (average)

\$17,452 equivalent to £11,000

UK universities

£3,145

Clearly it would be very difficult, indeed probably politically unacceptable for British universities to be given the right to raise their fees substantially over a short period of time, especially in the current difficult economic conditions.

The current procedure, under which the government funds a loan service which provides loans to students to pay the current fee levels, could however, be amended to allow over time for a gradual increase in fees to more realistic levels. These would be determined by universities themselves, providing they agreed to provide much greater financial support for needy students by building up their own endowments and encouraging the private sector to provide loans in addition to those available through the government scheme.

Admissions

Rather than relying primarily on national examinations such as the British A-level subjects, for which the results are only available in mid-August, most American universities and colleges use a combination of the below admissions criteria:

- the performance of applicants in the national Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs) administered by the College Board, and the Advanced Placement (ACT) tests given at age 16 or 17
- the student's grade point average in their high school,
- how well the application form is completed.
- a well-written essay
- how well the student performs at interview

³ Chisholm, J. (2008), *Universities and Industry: A perspective on the 21st century relationship*, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

- meaningful extra-curricular activities/ exceptional capabilities, especially showing leadership or superior talent and participation in voluntary activities
- advanced placement classes
- personal factors (especially geographic, ethnic, and/or socio-economic factors)
- increasingly, use is also being made of grades earned in the demanding six-subject International Baccalaureate Examination.

Most American universities make their admissions offers to students as early as March or April and some even earlier. While British universities make tentative offers of admission as early as the spring on the basis of estimated A-level results, actual admission depends upon the A-level grades actually achieved, which are not available until mid-August. UCAS⁴ does a splendid job of circulating vacant university places to students who do not achieve the necessary results to confirm their original placement offer.

However, A-level examinations could possibly be taken earlier in the year to speed up the admissions process.

Gifted and talented students

Leading universities such as Harvard make considerable efforts to encourage the most able students to apply to their university. Typically only one in ten applications is accepted. Sadly our own Gifted and Talented programme for identifying at an early age very able students, is not working well, particularly since the programme was taken over by CFBT⁵ from the University of Warwick.

Following the recommendations of Professor David Jesson of the University of York, a national Gifted and Talented scheme was introduced by the British Government in 2006. In that year, the 30,000 students aged 11 who achieved the highest 5% of combined Key Stage 2 scores in maths, science and English, were given Gifted and Talented status. The schools in which they were enrolled were informed of their Gifted and Talented status and encouraged to give them special encouragement and indeed to treat them as special needs students. Professor Jesson had previously tracked the performance of the very able 30,000 children entering secondary school in 1994 over the next seven years. Sadly, while most of the 30,000 did very well at GCSE, with many achieving 5+ A or A*, only 30% of them achieved 3 As at A-Level two years later and indeed one third did not even take A levels, with a high proportion of these students attending schools with no post-16 provision (which account for 50% of all English secondary schools).

More should be done in this country to nurture the talent of our most able children, not all of whom come from wealthy families. It is one of the greatest mistakes of the egalitarian supporters of 'one size fits all' comprehensive education that they believe you have to be rich to be very able and therefore able children do not need special support because their parents will help them to achieve good results. While the proportion of those eligible for free school meals in Professor Jesson's list of 30,000 very able children is lower than the national average of 13%, a significant proportion (about 5%) are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who are eligible for free school meals.

By contrast, very able US high school students are encouraged to study for advanced

⁴ Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

⁵ Centre for British Teachers.

placement tests administered by the College Board which is non-profit. This enables students to be awarded pre-college credit while still at high school.

Universities such as Johns Hopkins have a highly effective Center for Talented Youth which identifies very able children at an early age through tests such as PSAT and then provides, at low cost, inspiring residential summer schools for those children, who as a result will remain in full time education and apply to good universities.

There is another problem with the admission into good universities of very able British children from socially disadvantaged areas – they often receive poor advice on which A-levels to take. Geoff Parks, the Admissions Director of Cambridge University says that far too many able students applying to Cambridge have taken inappropriate A-level subjects which do not qualify them for admission to the university, such as media studies. For example, if a student wants to study engineering, they should take physics, maths and advanced maths at A-level.

Appendix 2 gives details of the typical admissions procedures for an American university.

Four-year degrees

Many American universities offer a broadly-based Liberal Arts curriculum in key subjects such as English, maths and science in the first two years of the typical four-year American undergraduate degree, followed by a focus on a major subject in years three and four. This system means that US students receive a more broadly-based university education than their British counterparts. As a 16 year-old,

the author studied at St Marylebone Grammar School in London for A-levels in History, French and Latin. He stopped studying science at age 14 and maths at age 16. As a result, when he took the GMAT (General Management Aptitude Test) required for admission to Harvard Business School, he did very poorly in the numeracy test, although this was offset by a high performance in the verbal section.

It would, of course, be unrealistic to add a year to the three-year British first degree courses, particularly as an American high school diploma only requires 12 years of school instruction while British A-level students spend 13 years at school.

Nevertheless, changes could be made in British degree curricula to encourage universities to offer at least some study of writing and numeracy skills in the first year of a British degree, together with courses in other Liberal Arts subjects such as literature and history.

Pure research versus research leading to new product development

A paper written by Ian Pearson published by the Social Market Foundation in 2000 said that Britain is falling behind in the development of innovative commercial products because, unlike American universities, there is too much focus on ‘pure research’ rather than on research which will lead to the development of new products. One of the reasons for this is the decline in the study of physics and engineering at our universities. Ian Pearson says that Britain is not particularly effective in turning ideas generated through pure ‘academic’ research and other sources into products and processes which

can be exploited commercially. As evidence of this he says that Britain's share of new patents in the world is much lower than our major competitors. We have less than 5% of US patents and European new patents, whereas Germany and France have over 10% and the United States has over 20%.

Some progress is being made to address this issue by the creation of science parks at universities but more needs to be done.

Private sector support for US colleges and universities

Traditionally, many US colleges and universities, especially those in the private sector build up very substantial endowments from gifts by alumni. Harvard for example, had in 2007 (it is lower now after the recent stock market decline) an endowment of \$29 billion on which they were earning 25% a year (\$7 billion). This enabled Harvard to be 'need blind' and admit able students who cannot afford to pay *any fees whatsoever*.

By contrast, even our most ancient of highly respected universities such as Oxford and Cambridge have only modest endowments of perhaps one billion pounds. Much of these funds are independently controlled by the individual colleges which make up the universities. As a result, most British universities rely substantially on government funding, although they can now charge £3000-per-year tuition fees paid to them by the student loan companies.

It is strongly recommended that in addition to the gift aid tax concessions, the government offers to match gifts to universities so that British universities will create their

own endowment funds. This could be for a limited period with the expressed purpose of ensuring that universities are able to build up funds to assist needy students, thereby reducing their dependence on the state and reducing the need for government to provide teaching grants in addition to fees paid by students through the loans system. Such a scheme was introduced two years ago but its success has been limited.

The current financial crisis will also make it increasingly difficult for British universities to raise more from alumni and private sector support, but surely more can be done, particularly when good times return.

Conclusion

Sceptics will say that it would be very difficult to introduce even some of the above techniques of the American higher education system into British universities. I do not believe this is true. We could raise standards in our further education colleges so that more students could earn credits towards degrees if and when they transferred to a university, or even obtain a higher education degree directly as is now the case in a few further education colleges.

We could easily improve accountability by encouraging accreditation of institutions more by peer group evaluation rather than by officials in order to encourage credit transfer between universities and to raise standards in general.

Allowing greater independence in general to universities, including the right to set their own fees, would encourage greater diversity in our

higher education system including encouraging more universities, especially the former polytechnics, to focus on teaching rather than trying to become research institutions. Raising student tuition fees will be difficult, but long term, a greater proportion of tuition costs should be paid by the students, providing there is adequate financial support for those students needing assistance, and that the additional funding from increased fees is retained by the universities rather than leading to a reduction in government funds from the Higher Education Funding Council. We must also raise the status and standards of further education colleges to make them the equivalent of the US Community Colleges and encourage more schools to have post-16 provision.

By encouraging choice and diversity and giving universities more independence, it would encourage different approaches to the structure of English degrees, including making the first year of an undergraduate degree more broadly based than the current system of focusing on just one subject from the first year. Finally, there should be greater encouragement for the establishment of new for-profit universities for undergraduates – BPP is a good example of this ⁶.

Opponents of change will say that these proposals are too radical and would not work in the United Kingdom. However, the success of Richmond, The American International University in London, founded in 1971 on the site of the former Richmond College on Richmond Hill, shows that American-style independent higher education institutions are viable in the UK even without the

provision of government financial support. Richmond, since it was founded in 1971, has built a worldwide reputation as an excellent American-style university in Britain. The University offers eleven degrees in a wide variety of subjects with particular centres of excellence in international relations, business and communications.

Richmond is accredited by the US Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, is licensed to award degrees by the State of Delaware and has its degrees validated by the Open University. Richmond degrees are also recognised by the British Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills through a statutory order. As a result, many Richmond graduates receive both a US degree and a British degree.

Uniquely, Richmond, which is a non-profit 501(c)(3) US Federal charity, as well as having an associated British charity, does not receive direct government funding for its undergraduate programme, although some of Richmond's American students receive loans from the US government and others scholarships from foreign governments.

Britons will only be able to raise their aspirations and income levels in future generations if they have a high level of education and skills. We have made progress in raising standards in our schools. It is time to give our universities the freedom they require to thrive in what has become a global market in higher education. If they are given that freedom they will respond by raising their standards and also providing greater choice and diversity.

⁶ See <http://www.bpp.com/>

APPENDIX 1

Transfer of prior academic credit

Credit for advanced standing

Students with advanced qualifications (e.g. A-Levels, French Baccalaureat, International Baccalaureate, Advance Placement Examinations) may be awarded course credit toward completion of degrees, after review by the Dean of Academic Affairs. This includes National secondary education credentials that are acceptable for entry to British universities, as determined by NARIC (The National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom) and/or UCAS (*International Qualifications for Entry to Higher Education*). The exact credit awarded depends upon examination grades and subjects studied.

Generally, awards for Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations and the Advanced Placement International Diploma (APID) are determined by the guidelines outlined by the College boards (<http://www.collegeboard.org>). Credit is awarded for grades of 3, 4 or 5 on AP Examinations. Six to eight credits are awarded, depending on subject area, for examinations covering two semesters of university-level work; three to four credits are awarded for examinations covering one semester. No credit is awarded for grades of 1 or 2. International Baccalaureate advanced placement awards are determined by the guidelines outlined by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (<http://www.ibo.org>). Six credits are awarded for grades of 4-7 on higher level International Baccalaureate (IB) subject examinations; three credits are awarded for grades of 4-7 on subsidiary level IB subject examinations. No credit is awarded for grades less than 4.

The maximum number of credits awarded for advanced qualifications is 30. The qualifications must be completed prior to enrolment at Richmond.

CLEP examination policy

Credit for CLEP examinations taken prior to enrolment at any university is generally awarded according to the guidelines on the College Board website. (Richmond does not offer CLEP examinations). Scores of 50 or higher are required. Six credits are awarded for examinations covering two semesters of university-level work, and three credits are awarded for examinations covering one semester. Several of CLEP examinations, especially those in Composition and Literature, have optional essays. If the essay part of the examination has not been taken, credit will be contingent on the student's performance on Richmond's English Placement Test. The CLEP examinations in Biology, Chemistry and Natural Science will provide elective credit only. They will not satisfy the Richmond Core experimental requirement.

Transfer credit from other colleges or universities

Transfer applicants must have a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher and be in good academic standing. Transfer credit is granted only for academic courses with grades of C or better, taken at accredited American colleges or universities, or at institutions of higher education in other countries that are recognised by the appropriate governmental agencies in those countries. Only credit is transferred; grades and grade point averages from other institutions do not transfer.

Up to 75 credits may be transferred toward the BA or BS degree. At most, 60 credits may be transferred from two-year colleges, where only lower division courses are offered. Regardless of the transfer credit awarded, transfer students must complete all Richmond proficiency, general education and major requirements that are not covered by equivalent transfer credit.

All transfer students registered for the Richmond BA or BS degree are required to complete a minimum of 54 upper division credits (18 courses), of which at least 45 credits (15 courses) must be taken at Richmond. At least 36 upper division credits (12 courses) must be taken at Richmond in the student's major.

APPENDIX 2

Admission to Richmond, the American International University in London

Applying to Richmond

Direct applications

Online or paper applications should be submitted at the earliest opportunity. Candidates are urged to apply electronically by using the online application on <http://www.richmond.ac.uk>. The application deadlines are as follows:

- March 1 for fall semester
- April 1 for summer semesters
- December 1 for spring semester

Late applications will be considered, provided there is space available.

Richmond also considers applicants who have not yet received their final exam results. They will be accepted on a provisional basis, and must then ensure that any remaining documents required by the University are submitted to the Office of Admissions prior to registration.

Richmond admits students on a rolling admissions basis. A completed file is reviewed by the admissions committee and usually processed within two weeks, and the applicant notified of his or her status within three weeks.

Admission to Richmond's undergraduate programs is based on a review of the following items:

- A completed application form;
- A personal statement;
- Official or certified transcripts of all secondary and post secondary school work to date;
- The Teacher/Guidance Counselor Confidential Reference Form or a confidential letter of reference from a teacher or other school official who can assess the applicant's academic ability;
- SAT or ACT scores. The CEEB/ATP code for Richmond is 08231 and the ACT CODE is 5244 (submission of these scores is optional);
- Evidence of the applicant's language proficiency in English (this applies only to students whose first language is not English or who did not attend English-speaking secondary schools). TOEFL or IELTS test results are recommended for assessing a student's language capability;
- Applicants must send a non-refundable £50 application fee.

All documents in languages other than English must be accompanied by official translations.

Students residing in the US must submit their applications directly to the US Office of Admissions, 343 Congress Street, Suite 3100, Boston, Massachusetts 02210-1212 USA.

UCAS applications

Richmond accepts applications through UCAS. Richmond's UCAS Code is R20. Students can apply online (only) at UCAS at **<http://www.ucas.com>**

UCAS applications will receive official notification of the admission decision through the UCAS system.

Admission requirements

Applicants have usually completed a total of 12 years of primary and secondary education with a minimum of C+ (2.5 out of 4.0) in the American high school grading system. Qualifications gained under other educational systems will be assessed for equivalency to the C+/2.5 American system standard. The Office of Admissions has details of entry requirements for most countries and will be pleased to supply further information. Contact **enrol@richmond.ac.uk** for more information.

The Admissions Committee will also consider other factors, including the letter of reference; personal statement; results of standardised examinations such as SAT, TOEFL, or IELTS tests; participation in extracurricular activities; and positions of leadership. Submission of inaccurate or false information may be grounds for rejection of an application or subsequent disciplinary action, including dismissal from the University.

English language proficiency requirements

English is the language of instruction at Richmond.

To meet the entrance requirements for university study, applicants must achieve a designated level of English language proficiency. All students (with the exception of students whose first language is English) *must* submit either TOEFL or IELTS results when applying for admission. TOEFL or IELTS results must be current within twelve months at the time of application. Submission of SAT/ACT scores is optional.

Minimum English language entry requirements for principles of writing (ENG 115 or ENG 215)

- TOEFL (Paper-based test) – 580, including a score of 4.5 on the Test of Written English;
- TOEFL (Computer-based test) – 237, including a score of 4.5 on the Test of Written English;
- TOEFL (Internet-based test) – 92, including a minimum of 24 in the writing component;
- IELTS – 6.5, including a minimum of 6.0 in the writing component

During Orientation Week, all students are assessed in academic English language skills for appropriate placement within the Academic Literacies and Languages Program (ALLP).

Students whose scores fall below these requirements may be admitted to the credit-bearing Foundations Program run by the ALLP.

Students with scores below the minimum requirements for the Foundations Program will be conditionally admitted into RLT (Richmond Language Training) to improve their English skills to the required level for university study. After one semester, students will take and need to pass the Richmond English Placement Test to be accepted into the Foundation Program. Students taking English language courses at RLT will receive no credits towards their degree at Richmond.

Diagnostic tests

The University has its own English proficiency test and a diagnostic mathematics test, which are given to all students when they first enter the University, unless a student is exempt due to relevant transfer credit in these subjects. The Dean of Academic Affairs determines these exemptions. Both tests determine the most appropriate level of English and mathematics courses for the students in their first semester.

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The Institute is a research and educational charity (No. CC 235 351), limited by guarantee. Its mission is to improve understanding of the fundamental institutions of a free society by analysing and expounding the role of markets in solving economic and social problems.

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- * conferences, seminars, lectures and other events
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