



Transforming Students: Fulfilling the Promise of Higher Education

Charity Johansson, Peter Felten

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The recent trend of trying to measure higher education's return on investment misses a fundamental point, argue Charity Johansson and Peter Felten. The central purpose of a college or university is to transform the lives of students—not to merely change them or help them mature. This transformation is an ongoing process of intentionally aligning one's behavior with one's core sense of personal identity. It is the university's central role to lead students in this transformation, a process that shapes students into intentional, critical, and engaged individuals.

Recognizing the remarkable influence of the college experience on peoples' lives, the authors offer a guide to how colleges and universities can effectively lead students through this life-changing process. Drawn from extensive interviews with students and graduates, faculty and staff, *Transforming Students* gathers diverse stories to show how students experience the transformation process, which rarely follows a neat or linear path. The interviews illustrate central themes from the literature on transformative learning and the undergraduate student experience.

A sequel of sorts to George Keller's classic *Transforming a College*—which chronicled Elon University's metamorphosis from struggling college to a top regional university? *Transforming Students* addresses the school's core educational mission: to shape students into engaged adults who embrace learning as a lifelong endeavor. Given this effect, the college experience is much more than preparation for a career. It is preparation for life.

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