

Summer 2013

## Book Review of, Cautionary Tales: Strategy Lessons from Struggling Colleges

Karen J. Haley

*Portland State University*, khaley@pdx.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/elp\\_fac](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/elp_fac)

 Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Administration Commons](#)

---

### Citation Details

Haley, K. J. (2013). Cautionary Tales: Strategy Lessons from Struggling Colleges by Alice W. Brown and Contributors (review). *The Review of Higher Education* 36(4), 557-559.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Leadership and Policy Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact [pdxscholar@pdx.edu](mailto:pdxscholar@pdx.edu).

the level of immersion or length of the program, it will likely have a negligible impact on participants if they consistently surround themselves with students from their own country, consider it a vacation from school, and do not engage in interactions with the host culture.

The authors view the phenomenon of student "transformation" as a result of study abroad with caution as potentially unreliable. They note the lack of any measurable data to back up these transformation claims. Instead cultural mentoring, provision of cultural content, reflection, engagement, intercultural learning throughout the study-abroad cycle, and interventions are suggested as best practices for improving the learning of students.

The chapters in Section 2, "Foundations of Teaching and Learning," present theoretical and research-based approaches to student learning in a study-abroad context. The authors describe the ways in which their respective disciplines, from psychology to biology to anthropology, play a role in the study-abroad experience. Chapter 10, "Learning Abroad and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" (SOTL) by Jennifer Meta Robison, is worthy of extra attention because it applies SOTL insights to study abroad. With reference to international educators, Meta Robinson wisely notes: "A culture of inquiry may be more effective than trying to disseminate any particular set of good practices to already busy people who are deeply embedded in particular contexts" (p. 254). Rather, social support structures such as instructional workshops, communities of practice, and networks can encourage the dissemination of innovations in international education.

In Section 3, "Program Applications," six study-abroad programs which seem to be producing results in terms of student learning outcomes are featured. For example, the University of the Pacific School of International Studies, which invests heavily in program faculty development, demonstrates that intervention both before and after a student's study-abroad experience through orientation and reentry courses is as important to intercultural learning as the event itself. Fifteen years of research on the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities Maximizing Study Abroad (MAXSA) program, which includes an online course as an intervention for study-abroad students, reveals that instructors must be skilled in guiding the learning process and supportive of students in multiple ways while student needs and interests should be directly addressed.

Other programs featured include the American University Center of Provence and its emphasis on holistic intervention; a shipboard academic program (the Scholar Ship) that focuses on intercultural and experiential learning; a seminar created by the Council on International Educational Ex-

change which helps students view cultures through different lenses and interact appropriately with other cultures; and the Bosley/Lou Intentional, Targeted Intervention (ITI) model, a method to achieve intercultural development among study-abroad participants.

Vande Berg, Paige, and Hemming Lou offer recommendations in their conclusion to readers who are interested in implementing the interventions discussed in the book. These include a holistic approach to study abroad involving defined student learning outcomes, investment in the training of cultural mentors, and implementation of assessment programs.

However, before committing to this book, the reader should know two things. First, it is clearly not written for individuals unfamiliar with the world of study abroad. The sheer volume of information coupled with the propensity of the authors to assume readers' prior knowledge of models, such as Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), and inventories, such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), could easily be off-putting. Also, there is little focus on graduate learning with relation to study abroad, a choice the authors made deliberately. Thus, those interested in the graduate student study-abroad experience will have to look elsewhere for information.

*Student Learning Abroad* need not be read in its entirety to be useful to individuals. The chapters on how students learn may be of interest to researchers while the chapters which examine successful study-abroad programs may serve as guides for international educators. As a whole, the book is a good resource for study-abroad professionals and has the ability to provide direction for programs needing new life breathed into them, particularly at a time when budgets are shrinking, calls for accountability are increasing, and students deserve, more than ever, to have truly meaningful study-abroad experiences.

---

**Alice W. Brown and Contributors.** *Cautionary Tales: Strategy Lessons from Struggling Colleges.* Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2012. 250 pp. Paper: \$37.50. ISBN: 978-1-57922-779-1.

REVIEWED BY KAREN J. HALEY, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF POSTSECONDARY, ADULT, AND CONTINUING EDUCATION, PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Alice Brown presents her research on colleges in crisis in 13 chapters, supplemented by the contributions of Susan Wheeler Johnston, Michael G. Puglisis, Elizabeth R. Hayford, Richard Knepper, Robert Zemsky, and Richard R. Johnson. Her goal

for studying “fragile” colleges was to find illustrative stories to serve as guides for colleges struggling to address social and economic challenges, and to reflect on “decisions made and actions taken” (p. xviii).

Brown presents the history of small private colleges as integral to higher education in the United States. Many such colleges opened and closed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The addition of large public universities and their subsequent enrollment of historically underserved women and African American students, however, resulted in a dramatically decreased percentage of students attending private colleges—from 50% in the 1950s to 19% in 2008 (p. 8). Most colleges do not close for a single reason, although it may appear that way when the most recent problem to arise seems insurmountable, such as funding that does not materialize, a lack of accreditation, decreased enrollment, or new competition.

The first section of the book addresses the different stakeholders in “turning around” a small college. The next three sections give case studies of colleges that attempted reinvention on their own, merged with another college or university, or partnered with a for-profit institution. Brown provides insight into these interesting cases, showing the processes leading to their success or failure to continue as an institution with a unique identity.

What does it take to turn a failing college into a thriving college? While the roles of leadership, financial resources, and a culture of cooperation are important, each chapter in this section focuses on the contributions of stakeholders. Trustees need to be well informed about the finances and accreditation without micromanaging; presidents need to manage and lead trustees and staff. Brown provides examples of presidents who came into a position without asking the right questions, thus putting themselves and their institution at a disadvantage.

Faculty and staff are colleges’ best assets, and they should not be the last to know about crises even though faculty governance may not provide the best process for crisis management. Faculty and staff can also be resistant to necessary changes in culture. Some deal with such resistance by excluding faculty and staff; however, Brown emphasizes the need to give personnel a voice along the way. Of course, financial resources may be the bottom line of a college in crisis. When colleges depend on tuition increases and outside loans, the problem of fiscal stability remains unsolved. Brown offers options such as building college consortia to pool buying power or hiring consultants to identify new funding.

Of the three cases Brown provides about “going it alone,” two schools closed, and one truly reinvented itself. Sue Bennett School started in 1897 and converted into a two-year college in 1922. There was little transparency in the on-

going struggle of the college, but clearly, it had had long-term financial problems. Options for increasing enrollment included adding sports and proposing a four-year program. Merging with the state’s community college system was considered and rejected; the loss of accreditation resulted in the final closure in 1997.

Mary Holms College, a two-year HBCU started in 1892, included a high school until 1959. Beyond the usual financial difficulties, the enrollment decreased when a new local community college opened, financial aid reporting became overwhelming, and recruitment from large cities became problematic. Ultimately, the college lost its unique niche to educate African American students and closed in 1997.

Lindenwood University, a two-year women’s college started in 1827, became a four-year in 1918, and coed in 1969. Dennis Spellman, first as a consultant, then as the president, created a radical turnaround by focusing on what the college did best—educate. He reduced staff, eliminated tenure, and focused on teaching. Another cultural shift was the recruitment of all students (open access) and a more conservative approach to students (an alcohol ban and no coed halls). In one year, Spellman had balanced the budget; and in two years, enrollment had tripled. Eventually, student life was reconsidered, services increased, and faculty regained voice (although not tenure).

Another option is merging with another college or university. While the times have changed and these possibilities may be limited, Brown offers both best and worst case examples. Barat College was a small Catholic women’s college. After struggling for 40 years to stay open, it merged with DePaul University as a last resort. Deferred maintenance costs, unrealistic enrollment projections, and a change in leadership ensured that the merger would fail from the start.

Western College and Miami University of Ohio merged in 1974. Western was a successful college started in 1853. At the time of the merger, it had a thriving student population and little deferred maintenance. The success of Western as a stand-alone academic department continued for 35 years. Change came about when the university and college values had become so enmeshed that there was no need for Western to remain a separate department although its “values” and history continued to be integral to the history of Miami University. This example of a successful merger reminds us that a good decision does not mean that colleges remain static.

The third option presented by Brown is to partner with for-profit institutions. The College of Santa Fe considered many alternatives before merging with a for-profit company. Previously, the Christian Brothers’ boys preparatory school and college kept costs low as they paid only the broth-

ers' living expenses. When the brothers retired or left, the college needed to hire new teachers with salaries. Many options were considered including merging with Savannah School of Art and Design, the New Mexico state system, or the community college system. However, none of those could assume Christian Brothers' financial obligations. The school finally merged in 2009 with Laureate Education, Inc., which benefited both institutions: Laureate paid the college's debts, upgraded the facilities, and provided stability. In return, the College of Santa Fe hosted the first U.S. site for Laureate's international arts students.

Finally, Brown offers "Lessons Learned" for small colleges to survive and thrive: (1) Admit that the institution is in trouble, (2) Do not postpone hard decisions, (3) Accept that compromise is critical for radical changes or mergers to succeed, (4) Concede that what works today may not work tomorrow (and that's okay), and (5) Seek new roles for small colleges. Brown was the primary writer of this well-written edited book. She made the connections for us so that the text flows between authors. She presents her research on these fragile colleges with compassion and a commitment to improving small college viability.

One book cannot do justice to the topic of success for our small private colleges, especially when presenting full stories. Brown's (2011) *New Directions for Higher Education* edition, *Changing Course: Reinventing Colleges, Avoiding Closure*, focuses on the successful reinventions of small colleges. While there is some overlap of content, *Cautionary Tales* provides a more cohesive narrative, and *Changing Course* describes many more examples of reinvention. Combining the two books offers a more complete picture and further guidance for trustees and administrators.

#### REFERENCE

Brown, A. W. (2011). *Changing course: Reinventing colleges, avoiding closure*. *New Directions for Higher Education*, No. 156. San Francisco, CA: Wiley Periodicals.

---

**Mark Auslander. *The Accidental Slaveowner: Revisiting a Myth of Race and Finding an American Family*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011. 383 pp. Paper: \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-8203-4043-2.**

REVIEWED BY JOHN H. METOYER, PROFESSOR OF VISUAL ART AND ENGLISH, WILBUR WRIGHT COLLEGE

Mark Auslander's ethnographic study, *The Accidental Slaveowner: Revisiting a Myth of Race and Finding an American Family*, sets out to answer the complex question of how, in 1834, a soon-to-be

Methodist bishop, the Reverend James Osgood Andrew, could have possibly become a slave owner while holding a respected position in a Christian sect that was progressively moving in the direction of taking an official pro-abolitionist stance? Accidentally, of course, or at least this is what the myth surrounding Bishop Andrew and his slave, Miss Kitty, tells us. What Auslander discovers in his research is not one, but two opposing sets of myths surrounding the relationship of Andrew and Kitty.

The center of Auslander's study begins in the small town of Oxford, Georgia, which is the original home of Emory University and the birthplace of the myths surrounding Miss Kitty Andrew, a slave who was rumored to have been left to the Andrew family by an aunt of Mrs. James Andrew. Through lengthy research and interviews that stretch from Midwestern towns in Iowa and Illinois to the deep South, Auslander uncovers two distinct and very complex myths: the Anglo-American myth, which depicts Bishop Osgood as the wrongfully accused, beneficent church leader who falls victim to his own generosity and goodness when his offer of freedom is refused by his accidental slave; and the African American myth, which portrays Miss Kitty as a powerless pawn and paints the bishop in the lurid colors of a manipulative, misogynistic opportunist, willing to do whatever it takes to become the national head of the Methodist Episcopal Church. What Auslander concludes, as he disentangles these contradictory myths, is that, as with all conflict and local myth, reality is not as clean-cut and simple as one is led to believe by the parties involved.

Though Bishop Andrew is an important character, the myth surrounding Miss Kitty is clearly the catalyst of Auslander's study. This is evident in Chapters 1 and 2, which take the reader from modern-day Oxford, Georgia, through the historical circumstances and relationships that defined American slavery, including the familial nature of the owner-servant relationships associated with chattel slavery in general, and specifically with the Andrew family.

Chapters 3 through 6 examine how the actual events, buildings, spaces, and relationships associated with Miss Kitty have become transformed and mythologized over 160 years of history. In the remaining Chapters 7 through 9, Auslander does an excellent job of uncovering, presenting, and piecing together the raw historical evidence associated with the various elements of myths surrounding Miss Kitty. This includes an in-depth investigation of the locations of Kitty Andrew's living descendants and a detailed history of what became of her children and grandchildren immediately following Miss Kitty's death, taking us into post-Civil War America. While interesting, the account of Miss Kitty's progeny strays from the core of what the study is really about—the actual history of Miss Kitty and the evolution of the myths that surround