Academic program reduction has become a common retrenchment strategy for coping with the economic recession of the early 1990s, especially for public research universities struggling with the tripartite mission of service, teaching, and research [17, 20, 45, 48, 63, 66, 68]. One recent report estimates that up to two-thirds of American public research universities have faced substantial budget cuts in the 1991–92 academic year alone [36]. Additive solutions are no longer a viable approach to resolving conflicting views over what knowledge to include in a campus curriculum, as was previously done with women’s studies and ethnic studies during the 1970s. In these times of fiscal constraint, long-existing academic programs with tenured faculty can be targeted for reduction or dismantling, as occurred in the 1980s with occasional retrenchment of semiprofessional schools such as nursing and education as well as departments such as geography and sociology [14, 46, 49, 52, 51, 59, 62, 83, 84, 96].

That academic program reduction entails intraorganizational turmoil is an undisputed empirical finding. However, the nature of that turmoil warrants further scholarly attention to account for ideological patterns among professional subgroups that may not be as apparent in times of

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1Decreasing resources and environmental uncertainty heighten turmoil among all organizational participants, especially among faculty and administrators [32, 37, 38, 73, 95]. In addition, conservatism, scapegoating, turnover, and resistance to change increase; while morale, innovation, and credibility of leaders decrease [23, 24, 94].

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abundance. Specifically, we need to identify and account for a confluence of interests and alignments that surface across campuses.

This article seeks to make a conceptual and empirical contribution by examining academic program reduction as a site of contested terrain, where campuses are seen as arenas of organizational struggle among groups to define and control professional work [46, 79, 80, 85]. The exploratory investigation draws on interview data from case studies of two public research universities, each the flagship campus in its state, where administrators proposed retrenchment as a primary strategy for adapting to substantial cutbacks in state appropriations (in the 10–15 percent range over two years, in the 20–25 percent range over three years.)

Semistructured interviews with forty faculty and twenty administrators captured how they, as both informants and respondents, made sense of organizational actors' interests in the budget crisis. Analyzing metaphorical imagery [56, 67, 77, 90], I focus on explicit and implicit alignments, that is, with whom the interviewees aligned themselves to justify their location and to whom they appealed for legitimacy.

Five major patterns of language, and thus groups, surfaced among organizational participants, each with distinctive appeals to external refer-

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1Between 1989–92 case study data were collected from multiple sources: taped in-depth interviews with over 60 faculty and administrators from two campuses; archival documents; newspaper clippings about the recession, the state deficits and ensuing declines in legislative appropriations; and documents that I obtained from interviewees, including public announcements from the campus administration and faculty's private correspondence about proposed budget cuts and research/teaching plans.

To provide historical context for interpretation, I also examined the past two decades of precedents for faculty-administrator relations on each campus, specifically the configuration of informal and formal governance structures. One campus had a history of antagonism between faculty and administration, evident structurally in the existence of a faculty senate, faculty union, and host of active informal faculty groups, whereas the other campus was marked by the absence of such antagonism and by only a few small, fleeting faculty groups.

The identity of the two campuses and people interviewed shall remain undisclosed and some identifying details omitted, because that was the stated preference of some of those interviewed [89] and because my driving interest was not in the particulars per se but in their heuristic value for generating conceptual insights about the nature of positions and alignments in higher education.

2The data analysis reported here reflects a two-stage thematic content analysis building on images of contested terrain that emerged from interviews, such as military battle, athletic competition, and courtroom defense. Initially, the analysis focused on a contrast of obvious organizational differences. On one campus, Western University (a pseudonym), war was the primary metaphor, where targeted faculty characterized the administration as aggressors and reacted individually to the fait accompli cuts as victims with shock and grief. At Eastern University (a pseudonym) the primary metaphor was legalistic, in which the faculty senate and union became courtroom-like forums in which targeted faculty championed their interests and won their case.
ents for legitimacy. First, executive administrators on campus spoke in a corporate language of alterations (for example, downsizing, consolidation) calling for swift, centralized decision making in order to adapt to mandates from the state and the market. Second, subordinate administrators (for example, deans) in the tier below the executive decision makers aligned themselves with the top tier’s discourse of alterations and, in a language of rationalization, tried to make sense of the content and process of budget decisions. Third, faculty research stars aligned themselves with the administrative language of alterations and justified their own entrepreneurial orientations with the language of the meritocracy in the context of national science policy. Fourth, targeted faculty claimed injustice over having been betrayed by the espoused meritocracy in the language of progressive politics, whether they were already cut as victims of administrative fiat or defending themselves against the threat of elimination without the support of powerful constituencies. Fifth, contiguous faculty, located in regions adjacent to targeted faculty, aligned themselves as surviving-yet-still-vulnerable spectators or as advocates of those cut, allied in the collective defense of faculty rights.

As is typical of exploratory studies oriented to generate concepts, this analysis is not meant to be conclusive. The selective nature of the sample and the anecdotal nature of the interviews are among the limitations of these data; but there are strengths as well. The data can be used for a preliminary investigation into the nature of organizational struggles to define and control professional work by locating the discourse among subgroups of faculty and administrators within the opportunities and constraints of the wider political economy. Further study is warranted to clarify the plausibility of these propositions, the mechanisms through which legitimacy is sustained, as well as the potential availability of resources to empower differently situated knowledge-bearing groups. As a starting point, this article seeks to convey in broad brush strokes the imagery of the five groups and implications of the alignments among them.

Even though the initial data analysis supported this internalist organizational contrast, a more compelling set of patterns emerged among groups across the campuses in the imagery that prevailed in their language when they alluded to having alignments with external constituencies. Accordingly, the second stage of data analysis focused on interview transcripts for imagery in the language of subgroups based on to whom they appealed as a basis for legitimacy and with whom they aligned themselves to justify their interpretation of the budget crisis. Three groupings were immediately apparent: executive administrators, faculty research stars, and targeted faculty. Further iterations and searches for disconfirming data led to two more patterns of data and, thus, groups: subordinate administrators and contiguous faculty.
Conceptual Underpinnings

In spite of a growing body of research on university decision making and on organizational adaptations to decline, we lack a framework grounded in two critical premises: (1) neither faculty nor administrators can meaningfully be considered as a monolithic entity, and (2) external constituencies, such as state, federal, and corporate funding interests, have gained prominence in academic decision making. To incorporate these premises, I draw on conceptualizations advanced by neo-Weberian and neo-Marxian theorists, who make problematic the demarcation between external and internal factors influencing knowledge legitimation [29, 30] and who make explicit a link between power and knowledge in higher education [6, 11, 16, 33, 39, 40, 42, 70, 78, 81, 82, 86, 93].

Studies of decision making in universities have underscored the dissimilarity between higher education administration and management of a firm. Characterized by goal ambiguity, unclear technology, collegial foundations, and loosely coupled activities, universities are known for slow governance processes and ineffectiveness in coordinating intraorganizational efforts [9, 13, 15, 26, 27, 28, 31, 60, 69]. Among studies on university decision making, especially in the face of diminishing re-

Historical analyses on the evolution of the university governance characterize that, in the abstract, faculty and administrators divided authority over separate jurisdictions, corresponding to their respective academic and non-academic domains of expertise. Although this division of academic labor sounded reasonable, it did not hold up well in practice over the past century [38]. One reason is that it presupposed each group had a sphere of relatively independent action, with little or no provision to coordinate faculty and administrative decision making. A second reason is that it failed to account for sustained conflicts of interest between faculty and administrators. A major conceptual advance was offered by Etzioni [37], who characterized the tension as rooted in professional versus administrative bases of authority.

Nonetheless, in the evolution of university governance, structural arrangements for shared governance have persisted by attempts to preserve each group's autonomy. Faculty decision making has remained decentralized to departmental units and held together by committees espousing collegial norms and overarching representative units of faculty senates [18, 27, 47]. Historically, faculty have been most active participants in decisions about curriculum and academic personnel [38]. This has been made easier in times of abundant financial resources, where growth among academic units was fueled by the notion that specialization could accommodate the surge of intellectual advancements produced by knowledge explosion.

Faculty involvement in reallocation decisions during retrenchment has been problematic. Centralized decision making has been enhanced when administrators assert they do not have the luxury of time, often signalled by labelling the situation "a crisis" [68], thereby enabling them to seize managerial control and bypass the traditional role of faculty in governance. While some observers advocate the need for top-down management in order to respond effectively to crises and productively to strategic planning challenges [10, 22, 25, 26, 60, 61, 64], others have characterized centralized decision making by executive administrators as the misapplication of the industrial model, for it restricts faculty involvement to the mere implementation of predetermined programs [46, 58, 83].
sources, two enduring tendencies are commonly cited: (1) impracticality of shared governance between faculty and administrators [8, 38, 92], and (2) self-interested behavior among all participants, in particular faculty, under scarcity conditions [19, 55, 60, 73, 88]. Cameron [21], for example, has observed an unwillingness to cooperate among internal constituencies (for example, faculty, students), and Dougherty [34] noted that disgruntled participants form antidiscontinuance groups (for example, faculty opposing cuts), thereby disrupting otherwise “well-executed program closures.”

This characterization of academic decision making and the presumption that faculty input is ineffective, if not in opposition to administrative directives, neglects the complex nature of conflicting interests surfacing in retrenchment. This oversimplification, I believe, is due in part to a tendency to restrict the level of analysis to an intraorganizational struggle between administrators and faculty, each claiming academic program cuts as their domain of expertise. To say that conflict in retrenchment is a matter of ambiguity over expertise is to define the issue as one of propriety, by raising a normative question of who should make decisions about program cuts. Although this may be a worthwhile intellectual exercise, the contemporary challenges facing universities suggest it is a moot point, because top administrators (perhaps due to time constraints) have been seizing the de facto rather than the de jure use of power, leaving faculty to either align themselves (through explicit support or passive acquiescence) with the dominant management trajectory or to reject it.

The struggle to adapt to shrinking resources — including successive annual and mid-year revisions by the state legislature — has proven to be a serious administrative challenge. It is not surprising that a wide range of scholars of higher education and organizations have devoted considerable attention to strategies aimed at reducing uncertainty in the environment, given sustained institutional dependence on state, federal, and corporate funding sources [2, 3, 26, 41, 50, 53, 54, 57, 74, 76, 87, 91]. Among the noteworthy theorists who have examined organizational strategies given resource dependence, Cameron [21] has observed a pattern of conservative organizational responses to buffer the organization against the environment's shrinking resource base. In the various types of domain adaptations that Cameron conceptualized, he noted consistent constraining factors or obstacles to effective management responses to decline.

There is a long history of the struggle being framed as a dispute over who should run the institution. Because retrenchment is a matter of both fiscal and academic policy, the domain of expertise is not clear.

From a faculty perspective, the decisions involve academic policy. Yet there are several reasons that faculty may not be inclined to participate actively: faculty are socialized to be independent, and institutional matters would be lower priority than promoting a career; there are no external rewards for faculty to increase their “service load;” faculty do not want to be blamed for finances, which is outside their purported expertise; faculty do not want to make decisions where the economic interests of faculty and students may be in conflict; faculty are instructed not to become involved formally by the faculty
The issue needs to be framed not normatively as one of ambiguity in expertise, but descriptively as one of struggle for legitimacy and power. The conceptual parameters are wider than the domain of propriety and involve the domain of power where subgroups among faculty and administrators, while they play out their struggles in local campus settings, are influenced by different material and ideological interests [46, 83], and thus different alignments within the wider political economy.

In the past few years, a wide range of evidence has been offered by scholars to support this conceptualization through linking knowledge with power and social relations on university campuses with underlying forces in the political economy. Two lines of inquiry have provided foundations for this conceptual approach: (1) studies that link external ties and constituencies to the use of intraorganizational resources [43, 44, 76, 78, 80, 90, 91], and (2) studies that analyze how universities, as mediators of national science policy, function as mechanisms of state power [4, 6, 11, 33, 70, 81, 82, 83, 84, 93]. For example, a recent study of technology transfer involvements within a research university examined how faculty and administrators each seek to legitimate their professional self-interests by aligning themselves with external referents (for example, corporate funding sources or public calls for accountability consonant with the university’s public service mission) [80, 85]. Other studies have documented how universities as knowledge producers for the state

union or informally by peer pressure [38]. Not surprisingly, faculty input tends to be confined to consultation on formal statements of procedures and criteria to be used, a kind of procedural rationality [7], but not substantively on specific programs or colleagues to be cut.

Alternatively, administrators are held accountable for the budget and fiscal planning. An efficiency orientation is consonant with corporate ideals to consolidate in a tight market: to do better with less [20, 51, 59, 63]. Because a large proportion (usually well over 50 percent) of university operating budgets goes to personnel expenses, adaptation generally involves cutting people and programs, in addition to a variety of short-term measures (such as not filling faculty vacancies). Decisions about program reduction and targeting programs for elimination ideally correspond to faculty-approved, formally stated criteria. Two are most often used: quality and centrality to mission, even though operationalizing what is meant by quality and centrality as well as devising centralized data as measurements to implement priorities or designate sacrifices [35] have proven to be unwieldy at least and misleading at worst [1, 65, 71, 72, 75, 83].

Adding fuel to the fire, the dispute between administrators and faculty is aggravated when administrative decisions deviate from agreed-upon procedures or criteria. This occurs when quality and centrality are obviously not the actual criteria on which decisions are based, when quality and centrality are not operationalized to the satisfaction of groups of organizational participants, when decisions appear to have been reached privately by the judgments of a few administrators, or when the decisions seem arbitrary and capricious because they contradict widely cherished meritocratic assumptions that rewards and sanctions are allocated on the basis of academic performances.
play both material and ideological roles in the production of social relations [4, 5, 6, 11, 16, 33, 70, 84, 93].

What is gained from acknowledging political economy forces is to see that academic retrenchment is not only an internalist organizational struggle to protect turf and scholarly reputations. Rather, retrenchment entails difficult value-laden, long-range decisions about the social functions and purposes of higher education, including what will constitute legitimate academic knowledge, academic vocations, and knowledge products and whether the commercialization of knowledge for revenue enhancement [82] will be a legitimate direction for higher education in the twenty-first century. Without incorporating this critical knowledge-power link, the high stakes involved in retrenchment would remain overlooked.

Executive Administrators: The Language of Alterations

Executive administrators on both campuses spoke prominently in the language of alterations, where efficiency was a primary concern. This general orientation and their selections of academic units to be reduced or dismantled were positioned with respect to an array of external funding sources as well as an interest in maintaining market competitiveness.

The organizational discourse used by higher education administrators was replete with vivid metaphors that underscored the necessity of consolidation and centralized decision making as they adapted to shrinking resources. Initially, administrators launched a self-proclaimed value-neutral call for efficiency, asserting a positive if not up-beat mandate for “belt-tightening” alterations, corresponding to the popular culture's self-improvement/health consciousness to “trim the fat,” and corresponding to the corporate mind-set to devise strategies for “downsizing,” “trimming deadwood,” “streamlining,” and “repositioning” as part of prudent planning for the economic pinch. This language of alterations was presented as an opportunity for across-the-board cuts and selective elimination of obviously “weak” or “non-essential” programs. By framing the discourse in this way, administrators proposed their plans as reasonable, clean, inevitable, de-personalized and de-politicized.

As the recession grew severe, administrative discourse on campuses came to convey an urgent search for expenditure reduction, specifically the inescapable need to reduce personnel and services. Calling for “deeper cuts” now that the “fat” was gone, administrators identified the inevitable: “cutting to the bone” and “amputating healthy limbs,” invoking an allusion to the steel will, focused intention, and technical expertise of surgeons. The selective cuts were presented as necessary structural
adaptations to austerity. As a provost stated, “There are tough decisions to be made. We don’t have six months; we have six weeks. With cuts this big, I’m better off killing one or two than weakening them all, you know, cutting off a limb to save the body.” The mixing of the language of scalpels with the language of swords is noteworthy, especially as another provost referred to the cuts as “surgical strikes.”

Some targeted programs were in transition, located in schools without visible leadership in the dean’s office, and yielded immediate cost savings by eliminating nontenured faculty positions. As I looked over the estimated figures with one provost, he pointed out: “We honed in on the places we thought we could do without. See how much money you can expect to save? There are major savings here. . . . With resources threatened, these programs look not terribly rigorous.” He judged these programs dispensable, even though he felt badly about terminating faculty: “The worst part is knowing the quality of people we let go. That’s a loss. . . . I don’t know whether we had any real hot tickets to put this place on the map, but it really bothered me, losing those resources.”

Thus, from the perspective of executive administrators, the budget crisis became a management issue, complete with corporatist language for what the process of doing more with less would entail: downsizing, streamlining, and unfortunate sacrifices. In the context of such efficiency efforts, it is somewhat ironic, I think that a strategy for implementing the cuts on one campus was to create a new executive administrative post, a vice-provost in charge of cuts, “to ease the transition” of “displaced faculty in disestablished programs.”

Pervading the discourse of academic program evaluation was a productivity paradigm, in which academic units were contrasted by how they measured up to three criteria: centrality to mission, quality, and financial cost/benefit [75]. Although executive administrators paid lip service to these criteria, they were often loosely coupled to decisions about cuts. As one provost explained, “How do you tell what to cut and what to keep? That’s what we need to measure. I can tell you what departments I think should be on each list but not how I arrived at the judgements.”

Not all executive administrators were so candid about the murky foundation for their preferences. Yet attempts to rank units based on centrality to mission were often framed with this statement: “If I can’t imagine a university without something, then it’s central. You know, like

\[\text{7The United States was at war in the Gulf at the time, so these terms of battle were especially timely.}\]
English or history.” Presumably reference to the mission as a touchstone should help designate program priorities from luxuries. However, after the dramatic expansion of academic programs over the past three decades, explained a provost in Orwellian terms, “Everyone likes to think that they are central; and yes, while all programs are essential, some are more essential than others.”

At both campuses, the provosts stated a conflict in the mission between the initial land-grant mission and having developed into nationally prominent research universities. The administrators needed to justify receiving state appropriations based primarily on their instructional and regional service contributions (for example, undergraduate teaching in the liberal arts and in the school of nursing). As a provost stated, “Yield and retention are now big issues. Those little students are the money-makers and the FTE ratio is all important.” However, sponsored research activities which brought in external funds weighed heavily as well, given the centrality of federal monies to maintaining institutional prestige.\(^8\)

Executive administrators’ specific selections for academic program reduction were to make cuts in education, physical education, and public health, among others. On both campuses education programs were targeted for the biggest proportion of the cuts. The president on one campus justified the cuts based on centrality criteria and referring to the elite institutions which they aspired to have as their peers, saying, “There are AAU institutions without schools of education but not without English or history departments.” Education programs, among other targeted programs, were “simply not central.” Executive administrators also noted that many targeted programs were “nationally ranked in the top five or ten, so I guess we leaned more heavily on the centrality criteria than the quality.”

Because centrality to mission was an ambiguous criterion, attempts to measure quality were used to distinguish among programs for reduction and elimination. At Eastern University, the provost’s office gathered data on undergraduate FTE, graduate FTE, research grants awarded,\(^8\)

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\(^8\)One consequence of production function thinking was that a school of education became “an easy target,” as an observer noted, “since they taught lots of graduate students and this was used against them.” Although counterintuitive, it is crucial to note that faculty in both schools of education had been locally recognized for outstanding teaching and nationally recognized for research merits, even though theirs was not the kind of research that generated large government or corporate research funds. The only programs in education that remained after the cuts on one campus were educational policy and management as well as a small program with a behaviorist orientation and substantial research grants.
and faculty productivity as measured by number of publications. Both the decision process and outcome were "severely flawed." According to a sympathetic observer, "it was an exercise in the pretense of measuring the quality of departments, but the numbers were all wrong and important strengths were overlooked." Furthermore, the data were not uniformly applied at Eastern University. There were "anointed programs," which were protected. As an administrator explained: "Some programs are safe. Like engineering and business. You just wouldn't want to throw them away." Months after this process of measuring quality via faculty productivity, the provost concluded, "What I've learned is not to even pretend to make these decisions based on quantitative data."

At Western University, executive administrators did not even go through the pretense of collecting data to make the process look objective. The provost stated: "We separated the procedural question from the criteria question. We got the faculty to agree in principle. Then, with a small, hand-picked group of faculty, we costed out the programs informally to see what combination of cuts would yield this amount of money, but their deliberations were entirely confidential and cost/revenue data by program for the public consumption were deliberately not done. ". . . We weren't going to cost it out even if we had time. It might lead to a wrong decision. And we knew doing it publicly would only generate challenges to the data and the decisions." In this case, executive administrators knew that they ended up cast by some people as "perpetrators," where the programs or "victims on the hit list" were seen to be unfair, arbitrary, and capricious decisions. It was suggested that "the cuts were made first, and the criteria for making them were assembled after the fact." "It's the controversial and tough route," said the provost, "but we know it's the right thing to do, although not the easiest."

Another criterion in the production function approach was to examine administrative overhead, specifically the ratio of cost to output. This proved to be elusive, because there was no agreement on what the outputs were or how to measure them. In spite of the fact that university activities did not fit with a production function analysis, some administrators tried to conceptualize academic units as "mini cost centers," which resulted in the labeling of some programs as "a debit on the books," whereas others were "paying their own way." The idea in reallocating resources was to concentrate them in the most profitable areas. Even though such intraorganizational distinctions were troublesome to some faculty, the campus was nonetheless viewed in this way by external constituencies, especially the legislature, when contrasted with other state-funded agencies. As a provost clearly explained, "We don't fit with
the politics of the state, since we are seen as a high-cost service operation. We don't solve problems for the state. We are the problem.” Given the interests of legislators then, executive administrators knew it was important to speak in a language of consolidation to “do more with less,” while being mindful to “protect the core” and “avoid program duplication in the state.”

Subordinate Administrators: Rationalizing Alterations

Subordinate administrators made sense of decisions about budget cuts by trying to rationalize the process and content of top administrators' alterations. “How do you contract comfortably into something smaller and better?” one dean reflected; “No one knows, although we know how to expand.” This dean had been on the faculty at Eastern University for over twenty years and observed the heightened tension in the multiple missions of a public research university. “We encourage the research mission and now we are charging 40 percent higher tuition and fees, which we know is not really consistent with the land grant mission.” He explained that the intention was not only to increase tuition but to increase the proportion of out-of-state students, so it could run “more like a publicly-funded, private institution, like Colorado, so we can have more autonomy.” Reflecting on attempts to use objective data in arriving at the “hit list,” the dean expressed that they had learned to do it differently in the next round of cuts: “We claimed it's rational, but it's not. Maintaining the myth that it is makes it more divisive for our sense of community. Next time we'll just do it and not talk about it.” A dean's staff member who defended the initial strategy added, “The numbers are wrong and do not match accurately, but they tell part of the story.”

A school of education dean who had sleepless nights wrestling with how the university would handle future “rounds” of cuts reflected on whether there should be across-the-board cuts or selective program cuts. This dean offered an analogy to handling scarcity in a family: “Should we all eat rice this winter and forgo summer camp, or give away the youngest child and oldest family member?” When the president and provost determined that programmatic cuts would again be made, including twenty full-time positions from this school, the dean “had two days to work with them and determine whether they had targeted the right ones.” The process was exceedingly difficult, yet the dean managed to reduce the number of positions lost to about a dozen. Noting that the school of education taught substantial numbers of graduate students
which won them national visibility, the dean remarked that this “made us vulnerable with the legislature, especially since there is an oversupply of teachers in the state.” The dean was also quick to point out that children are a powerless constituency, so that even though teacher education is useful to the state, it is not valued highly.

In the case of the other school of education dean, personal characteristics were attributed as relevant, because the dean was excluded from decision making entirely. Much like targeted faculty, administrators in the dean’s office responded as if victims of executive fiat. As one stated, “The centrality issue was a red herring, a post-hoc justification. The real issue was where they could get the money the fastest, the largest number of untenured, with least disruption to everyone else.”

Members of the dean’s staff also tried to make sense of the disproportionately high number of women and minorities who were either faculty or students in their targeted programs. Those who were troubled by this pattern noted the apparent retreat from affirmative action, whereas those who kept in mind fiscal priorities saw it as “an unhappy coincidence.” In addition to the gender of people directly cut, the gender of the subject areas did not go unnoticed: some programs targeted to be dismantled involved women and children (teacher preparation) and older people (gerontology), whereas programs for the preparation of administrators, for example, remained intact. It was difficult for subordinate administrators, who had oversight responsibility for academic programs to be reduced/eliminated, to justify the apparent retreat from affirmative action policies and the apparent devaluing of their programs whose mission was to serve external constituencies with no clout in the political system.

Even more problematic for these administrators, however, were attempts to correct centralized data from the provost’s office. In some cases, there were clear inaccuracies and misjudgments: some targeted programs were revenue-generating in undergraduate enrollments; graduate student enrollment in targeted programs was underestimated by hundreds; revenue from summer programs had not been noted; a program that was entirely self-supporting was not acknowledged as such; there was no program duplication in the state for doctoral study in curriculum and instruction, a field distinct from teacher preparation; education programs were not all applied in nature; education faculty and students were not self-contained but had linkages with allied fields in arts and sciences departments.

These administrators conveyed the wide range of objections to the executive decision makers. At Eastern University, the flaws in the decision
process and outcomes were so apparent that the plans were blocked; the provost's next step was to work more closely with the deans in determining the next round of cuts. At Western University, the plans for cuts went ahead as "a done deal," and this second tier of administrators were left trying to implement and make sense of the sacrifices. For example, some people offered justification, such as "field experience for teacher education did increase in cost."

Some subordinate administrators had the most difficult time with faculty who were cut during the tenure review process. As an associate dean rationalized: "They are extremely angry. Whatever we do isn't right, or enough, because all they really want is restoration. In some way it's really better for them. The junior faculty are more marketable than the tenured group, who we'll try to find homes for on this campus or on another campus in the system." Others struggled with the sense of "no bottom" to successive budget cuts. As a dean at Eastern University for six years and a faculty member there for twenty years remarked: "I think I had a good run for a while. The last few years began to fall apart with budget recissions in mid-year. It's hard to make adjustments. I can't pull off a decision. So many angles and restrictions. This place is almost ungovernable."

Faculty Research Stars: Language of Meritocracy

Faculty research stars aligned themselves in the language of alterations with administrative attempts to downsize, "to overcome organizational inertia," to eliminate academic units that "didn't pay their way" or that "were a debit on the books." These faculty were devoted to the pursuit of excellence in fields that were supported with government and corporate funds, especially biomedical and physics research.

At the same time, faculty research stars justified their continued allocation of resources (if not an increase) due to their entrepreneurial orientations. In the language of the meritocracy, they spoke in athletic imagery about the need to be tough-minded, build strong departments, and maximize talent in the face of stiff competition for funding among peers. These faculty justified administrators' swift "surgical strikes" as an expedient way to handle cuts. As a scientist explained: "We must lop off something to protect the rest, to keep our academic integrity. We need to support the strong, powerful schools with national recognition." Another scientist said, "Are we going to lop off a few or cripple everyone?" And another: "We need to cut programs with low prestige, low enrollment, and no grants or contracts to speak of." A colleague on another
campus remarked on the growing anxiety among faculty and the predictability of which fields would be on the hit list: "The administration knows people are nervous. We'll have to cut schools and everyone knows what schools they'll be, . . . education, physical education, health. They just don't pay their way."

A pragmatic and tough-minded approach was called for, as illustrated by the strategic remarks of this physicist: "One method is to let the untenured faculty go. It's seen as painless. Then you can blend the tenured people out by moving them to another department with less administrative support. The idea is to see how much you can squeeze out of a program without hurting our institution's reputation." As a colleague in biology explained, it is essential not to lose a program that will bring the university laurels: "Which programs will likely grow and bring luster and glory to the institution? Where are the golden eggs? Which will become programs of distinction, steeples of excellence? It is essential not to put the wrong program on the chopping block." In an additional matter-of-fact tone, a neuroscientist on the same campus observed that such strategic distinctions among academic programs resulted in clear distinctions among faculty located in those programs: "The administration had to plan to squeeze off the old land grant portions like agriculture and education in order to run with two tiers of faculty, the stars with the grants and the teachers of Shakespeare to service the huge undergraduate population."

Adding visual enhancement of this stark characterization, it is worth noting that faculty in the valued disciplines are located apart from the less valued ones on the other side of the campus. The humanities are in old buildings, as is education, which sits on the periphery. In contrast, the sciences are in new buildings, some of which stand as high rises and are the tallest buildings on campus. When I interviewed a dean of a school that included the biological and physical sciences, his office was located on a top floor of a brick fortress-like building with dark tinted windows. His comments vividly underscored my visual impression: "The science programs are insulated from the rest of the campus. Nothing is going on. No one is on the job market. Lots of them are oblivious to what is going on. They are buried in their work. . . . The star system is still intact with matching offers; it's demoralizing to the rest of the faculty who have not had much in the way of raises. . . . But we do need to protect our faculty from what's going on in the rest of the campus."

Faculty research stars extended beyond the science disciplines per se to include faculty in fields with direct corporate sponsorship. A dramatic illustration is the case of an art education program, which had been tar-
targeted for elimination along with other subjects in which teachers are prepared. The program was saved through the charismatic leadership and savvy of the program’s director, who managed to realign it with the entrepreneurial orientation of star programs. As the director explained, “The initial targeting was a mistake. Our name is a misnomer. We should really be called ‘arts management.’ Of over one hundred students in our program, only six are in training to be teachers. The program is really arts administration, as in museums.” In visible support of this distinction, the program was located within the school of architecture, well across the campus from the school of education.

The director recalled the responsiveness of her targeted unit, whose faculty and students rallied to protect three untenured positions: “We jumped to act. We collected five notebooks of FAXes from all over the world in seventy-two hours — from research institutes, corporations and industry, and alums. The letters showed the extent to which this program consistently meets local, national and international needs. We were the only program saved. . . . We mobilized all the resources we could with lightening speed. We also justified the program by showing its heavy interdisciplinary reliance on the liberal arts. . . . What seemed most compelling was that we ranked second nationally in the country and there was no program duplication in the state. . . . The administrators were shocked when they realized they might be alienating their corporate supporters. Our work is valued by them and many of the FAXes spelled that out.” The director contrasted this program’s quick and effective defense with the school of education’s inability to coalesce. Potential for leadership from the dean’s office was not relevant; the director explained, “We did it without the dean’s help; he was out of the loop.” A critical factor, in the director’s estimation, was responding effectively to the competitive mandate and mobilizing their corporate constituencies, who attested to the valuable contributions in training people for computer graphics and “management of the high arts.” The director underscored how it was essential to want to be valuable in this way: “To whom do you attribute power? If you don’t want to have power or think you have power, no one will give it to you. We do and they did.”

**Targeted Faculty: Victims and Defendants**

Targeted faculty reacted to plans for academic program reduction in two basic patterns: as powerless victims or enraged defendants. In both cases the language of progressive politics was prominent in protesting the injustice done to them and calling into question whether their elimi-
nation was a necessary structural adaptation for the university to survive [46].

With the aforementioned exception of the art education program, faculty in targeted programs at Western University responded as if victims of war, casualties in the administrative strikes to cut allegedly weak programs. At Western, the experience of targeted faculty was one of betrayal, because there was no history of antagonism or hint that the administration was anything but benign and fair-minded. Even though the executive administrators were new to the campus (within a few years), faculty assumed that “the new guard” was like the former one, whom they entrusted to make pragmatic and forward-thinking adaptations “for the good of the institution.” These cuts showed them otherwise, both in the decision processes and outcomes.

When news of the cuts surfaced at Western University, targeted faculty learned that administrators justified excluding faculty from decision making by characterizing them as resistant to change based on two presumptions: myopic self-interest of faculty to protect departmental turf and academic analytical preferences to deliberate thoroughly over alternatives before pursuing a course of action. In response to being left out of centralized decision making, targeted faculty characterized administrators as aggressors and cast themselves as victims. As a faculty member noted: “These cuts were a master strike, closely held, and very quick to preclude re-visitor the decision.”

Shock and grief were commonly expressed, as one of the targeted physical education faculty reflected: “The faculty [senate] had approved the procedure and criteria, that non-productive programs would be cut as well as those without a national reputation. When I knew that, I thought our department would be safe. Essentially we were told what we do is worthless, in being cut. We did get some letters of outside support, including one from Arnold Schwarzenegger. But it didn’t seem to help. We were defeated. . . . It’s really devastating.”

The elimination of the teacher education program is also an area where some targeted faculty were surprised and dismayed. An additional dimension of irony is noteworthy: the program had just completed a transition from offering undergraduate degrees to offering a fifth-year master’s degree program. Though faculty had initiated this program transformation, in part, to be “more rigorous and respected,” ironically it contributed to their own demise, because the program was perceived to be “in transition;” moreover, as a fifth-year program, students could now go elsewhere in the state.

Some targeted faculty seemed to accept if not internalize the oppres-
sors' message, whereas others refuted it. Those who responded passively recalled being stunned, "There was no opportunity to act. It happened so fast. It was a fait accompli." On a fundamental level, these faculty were given a clear message: "We are a debit on the books. . . . We were told we did not matter. We were disowned. Now we have no home." And as a colleague described, "Some people are offering their condolences to us as if we are a death in the family." In contrast, a targeted faculty member in education stated defiantly, "We are formidable no matter what they do to us. It's a terrible mistake. . . . They've eliminated us under the guise of program duplication in the state, but this isn't so." Another asserted, "We are the victims of ideological discrimination. . . . The university has 'physics envy.' Its mission has become distorted." This professor with some colleagues expressed that something other than their job performance seemed relevant to the elimination of their positions.

In contrast to the shock and dismay that prevailed at Western University, targeted faculty at Eastern University quickly mobilized in their own defense and successfully blocked administrative plans to cut any unit right away. Using the formal structures of the faculty senate and union as well as a language of collective faculty rights that warranted protection, faculty rallied visibly and vocally on campus. In addition to these formal forums, faculty organized in an array of informal networks to hold protests, get publicity in the media, print leaflets, and do outreach in an active letter-writing campaign to parents and alumni. This collective resistance is of no surprise, given that faculty had already been mobilized against the administration in more than a decade's worth of outright conflicts over mandatory furloughs and salary freezes.

Faculty at Eastern assessed the situation antagonistically, often with outright anger over programs and positions that were slated to be "slashed" or "chopped," terms with negative allusions to the surgical butchery of medical malpractice rather than to administrators' skillful, technical expertise. These faculty were critical of executive administrators' attempts to ally themselves with conservative financial sources in state and corporate funding. One vocal member of the union made sense of the targeted programs in this way: "The administration has attempted to manage the cuts rather than resist them. . . . The top administrators are using the budget crisis to re-make the university into a high tech and applied science institution. At the same time, they are lowering resources and increasing teaching loads in the humanities and social sciences."

In contrast to Western University where the response of targeted fac-
ulty mostly had a post mortem forensic function, at Eastern University the ongoing antagonism accomplished an intraorganizational standoff, if only temporarily. Both targeted faculty and top administrative officials sought to establish ties to the state legislature and public, hoping to acquire legitimacy and resources from their external constituencies in a state where leaders of private higher education held a near monopoly on resources. The immediate future looked bleak for the whole institution, because they had already sustained several tuition hikes, lost some faculty stars, and anticipated declining undergraduate enrollments. While there was no collective vision at Eastern University, there was a collective sensibility of plight, even though targeted faculty were outspoken in their condemnation of administrative strategies for handling the budget crisis.

Contiguous Faculty: Survivors and Advocates

Contiguous faculty, those who occupied positions in regions adjacent to targeted faculty, knew that they might be next in line and perceived that their programs would be easy to cut. As a professor of public health remarked, “If it’s not them, it could be us, so I’m keeping a low profile.” Some programs next in line were initially central to the core land-grant mission (for example, education) and became displaced from the contemporary mainline function of research and commercialization of higher education.

Contiguous faculty used imagery that corresponded to their campus situation: at Western University speaking as surviving-yet-still-vulnerable spectators, they “hunkered down to weather the storm;” whereas at Eastern they spoke out as advocates “in the same boat” as targeted faculty and thus in collective support to protect the democratic interests and rights of the academic domain. The difference between the response of contiguous faculty on the two campuses was apparent in how they responded to the official announcement of targeted programs. At Western University the cuts were announced at a meeting of all faculty; according to an observer, “People sat quietly. Some actually cried. Some of those not cut were thinking, if not them, then me. We can get along without these programs.” In contrast, at Eastern contiguous faculty joined rallies, organized a teach-in, fostered publicity and collective outrage.

At Western, the carry-over of the language of war (or at least violence) was striking: contiguous faculty identified with those cut, or “displaced,” and spoke of victims and perpetrators. Grief, disbelief, dismay,
and other emotions that accompany a disaster were prominent in conversation, a marked departure from the otherwise impersonal academic discourse. There was even survivor guilt [19], especially among those in a small "protected class" of untenured minorities. Faculty in intact areas, some of whom felt vulnerable themselves, decided to "lay low" rather than call attention to themselves for fear they might be next. Contiguous faculty on this campus objected to administrative action done quickly and without structural opportunity for faculty to have input, whereas their faculty star colleagues said it was "a preferable course of action." It was preferable in two senses: to contain the cut by lopping off an area rather than bleeding everyone; and preferable to lines of battle being drawn among faculty, which had actually happened in a budget crisis two decades earlier, a divisive experience that, according to some observers, left lasting scars among colleagues. Contiguous faculty responded individualistically by closing their office doors, and some began searching for jobs elsewhere. Exceptions to this pattern were some professors in the school of education who lobbied locally and at the state level to save the education programs, "in the interests of children and community service."

Contiguous faculty at Eastern University consistently expressed a different ethos, one replete with images of progressive politics from the Civil Rights, free speech, and women's liberation movements. Unlike Western where they survived a contained attack between powerful administrative aggressors and victimized faculty, contiguous faculty at Eastern joined the campus discourse and helped hang banners stating "No More Cuts" and "Don't cut off circulation. Fund our libraries!" The result was a contested quality with the language of protest, as if handling the budget crisis were an ongoing dispute over propriety and rights. These faculty explicitly addressed moral and ethical considerations as well as legal consequences of declaring financial exigency (which the university did not do). The assumption was that faculty rights needed to be protected from the institution. Having experienced years of cuts "piggybacking" on successive cuts, these faculty had all been affected by salary freezes and mandatory furloughs. Conditions of scarcity over the past decade at Eastern were as much a part of life there as was the faculty union, whose leadership overlapped that of the senate; faculty in both groups considered executive administrators to be incompetent and lacking in leadership.

All of this contributed to a trend at Eastern: faculty flight. Whereas some faculty had pride in dealing with hardship ("There has been a perverse pride among faculty to put up with hardship and work hard. It's
the ethos of this place.”), others were compelled to leave. “Faculty flight” from Eastern was on the rise, which signified a decline in the sense of community. A tenured social science professor remarked: “Until recently we were all in this together. It has gotten way out of control. Now it’s go for yourself. Cut the best deal you can. . . . It’s partly a generational thing. The younger faculty have a different socialization. You do as little as possible for the institution to advance your scholarship. The first obligation is to themselves and their careers. The new definition of success is to go to places with the bigger bucks rather than stay in one place with a commitment to it. . . . The provost reinforced their socialization saying they should be protected from doing more than the minimum of work beyond their scholarship.”

Among the forums at Eastern for faculty to act vocally and collectively were the formal structures of the senate and the union in addition to several informal groups (by field and across field by rank, for example, junior faculty). The nature of administrator-faculty and faculty-faculty communication reflected a contested quality of courtroom deliberation, and contiguous faculty articulated a defense on each count. First was the foundational issue over who should “run the show”: whether the technical expertise of the administration, which has ultimate fiduciary responsibility, or the academic expertise of faculty. These faculty tended to display an interest in “how did we get here?” which corresponded to the administrators’ justification that faculty were slow to move out of the story and into the solution.

Second, while this issue quickly became a moot point, the question of how to proceed was urgent: is it best to starve all or eliminate a few, to do across the board or programmatic cuts? Because there had been at least four years of “bleeding everyone,” some faculty were persuaded to the strategy of eliminating “sub-standard programs.” However, the criteria were contested. Some faculty who objected framed the issue as one of organizational identity, an opportunity to clarify and redirect mission [1]. Yet, they refused to make designations, because there was already consensus on the programs to be protected and targeted for reduction, in spite of the inability of administrators and faculty research stars to define or justify the terms.

Lastly, contiguous faculty objected to centralizing what are inherently decentralized educational activities. Two features of this are particularly salient: one is the meaninglessness of centralized data, an acknowledgment of non-comparability of data across academic units; and the second is the futility of attempting to convey to “administrative executives” the nature of creative, academic enterprises in terms of things that
can be counted. The union was vocal on this point along with the related issue of the inappropriateness of an administrative mandate for faculty to generate revenue, especially for academics in fields with definite non-entrepreneurial orientations.

Most noteworthy about the contiguous faculty at Eastern was their cohesion against the administration and the faculty research stars. On the surface, one might think administrators and faculty would have been allied to rally in the face of “a common opponent,” the state legislature. In some sense, this was true, as well as being allied with one another in a state that is dominated by private higher education. Yet, the lack of cooperation between contiguous faculty and administrators predominated. These faculty in the short run wanted to protect their interests and right to oversee academic programs, while in the long run they stood on a political platform with ties to democratic and labor interests and to a politicized student body seeking to safeguard the public interest in higher education.

Conclusion

The larger issue situating universities in the wider political economy must not be obscured: the state legislatures’ redirection of funds away from higher education (and other social services). Though this shared concern might on the surface seem to be a stabilizing factor to bring cohesion among participants within a public research university, these data suggest that the budget crisis clarified how organizational participants are positioned differently with respect to external constituencies and in opposition to each other. The patterns and groups discussed in this article suggest three overarching alignments of interests that warrant further discussion and investigation: (1) executive administrators and faculty research stars with their funding sources, (2) targeted faculty with their powerless constituencies, and (3) targeted faculty and contiguous faculty in collective defense of faculty’s professional autonomy.

The alignment between executive administrators and faculty research stars on each campus reflected consistent priorities and values, away from the initial land-grant mission to contemporary national science policy. As one faculty member termed it, “We’ve gone from being a land-grant and sea-grant university to a space-grant research institution.” The correspondence in the language of alterations and the language of meritocracy was physically evident in the new science buildings (built with federal funds) under construction at the same time that the state budget deficit necessitated elimination of some academic programs. This is a
stark visual representation of a convergence of interests between valued academic units and federal research funders.

One outstanding exception to the cooperation between administrators and research faculty concerned setting the indirect cost rate. Faculty wanted a lower rate in order to have their grant proposals stand a better chance in the competition, whereas administrators wanted a higher rate to recoup overhead expenses, such as for lighting, heat, and centralized services like libraries. This conflict of interest suggests that administrators and researchers viewed themselves as competing within slightly different markets, although overall each was attempting to extract as much funding for themselves as was possible from external sponsors. Taken together, the grant-seeking orientation and aspiration to be a premier research university reflected a tilt away from a mission where resources are earned based on undergraduate teaching and regional service.

As a corollary to the administrator-researcher-big science alignment, a second alignment of interests existed among targeted faculty in commonly devalued fields across the campuses with their powerless constituencies. Pointing to the myth of the meritocracy, some targeted faculty experienced a contradiction in the reward structure, especially those who had previously been honored for excelling in teaching and research. Others found themselves frustrated by the hierarchical nature of decision making. According to one assistant professor of education, “on the department level it’s participatory management but not in the places making real decisions. We have no access.” And efforts were futile among those faculty who tried to generate support from their local constituencies to persuade the state legislature of their merits. As one faculty member noted, “It is to a great extent our relationships with the public and the legislature that have gone awry, rather than the economy per se.”

Standing as voices for the interests of children, education professors, with those in allied fields, heightened public awareness of the extent to which their contributions were seen as non-essential and dispensable at a time when public discourse accentuated stark economic realities and the potential for turnaround via commercialization and commodification of knowledge [82]. A savvy social scientist commented on the naivete of some faculty in devalued fields: “They don’t think structurally. It doesn’t cross their minds, and they can’t see through these things politically to the larger picture of education. They run around thinking this can’t be happening and then it does and they’re surprised.” All the while, she implied, faculty become more disempowered by their inability to mobilize anyone within their already relatively unempowered constituencies.

A third alignment of interests that warrants further attention is that
among targeted faculty and contiguous faculty in defense of the autonomy of academic professionals. As one observer characterized, "What we are witnessing here is the abandonment of public higher education. . . . We also don't know if this budget crisis has any bottom given the state deficit. How poor we'll be depends on how robust the state economy will be. We may have to consider entire campus closures in the next round of cuts." The observation that administrators "made the cuts and then they made the criteria for the cuts" reflects an assessment that faculty lost not only public funding but autonomy as well. Not only were faculty not consulted in the decisions, but the overriding criteria were deemed beyond their professional judgments. At Eastern where faculty organized themselves through formal and informal structures, they explained their successful opposition as rooted in progressive politics. As one explained the inclination to coalesce: "We have always worked against the system. We understand oppression and know how to fight. We've been through it before." Though faculty at Eastern stopped the cuts at least temporarily, it is not clear that unionization is a viable route to the survival of the university or to the satisfaction of those who remain.

In sum, the fate of contending academic fields may have less to do with the ideas themselves (that is, how original, coherent, or brilliant) and more to do with their instrumental value vis-à-vis the broader political economy that tilts toward an explicit service orientation to the state and its ancillary abundant markets (for example, corporations). A significant problem remains in public research universities that aspire to be premier research institutions: academic ideology promises faculty collegial authority, shared governance, and a meritocracy of rewards, yet economic realities loom large. The dependence of public research universities on multiple funding sources in the abstract may help buffer them from unstable resource foundations, but it simultaneously necessitates adaptation to conflicting demands.

As sites of contested terrain, universities display wide and dynamic divergences in professional power. Obviously, there is no way to handle a budget crisis that is not painful, especially in an academic climate where talk tends to focus on selective program elimination rather than on the appropriateness of revenue enhancement activities. As administrators and faculty muddle through academic program reduction, it may become more apparent that we have created an even bigger long-term problem, even though in the short term it is masquerading as a solution. Knowledge-bearing groups of academics will likely continue in their self-elaborating tendencies. Those with wider power bases will accumu-
late more resources. However, whether they do so while sacrificing their autonomy in the service of the state remains to be seen; and who will be the winners and losers in the long run is not readily apparent.

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