Though San Jose State included a community outreach/economic development component in its mission, the college was unable to embrace some of Sperling’s academic initiatives. He turned to other regional institutions in the hope they would accept his adult education program called the Institute for Professional Development. In this, he ran square into the constraints of departmental control and academic infighting.

In 1972, with $26,000 in savings, the merchant marine-turned-professor launched a company dedicated to providing working adults with the opportunity to earn academic degrees in the same time it takes full-time students to do so. Today, his Apollo Group, with its University of Phoenix subsidiary, is a $500 million public company.

Rebel with a Cause is Sperling’s exciting account of how far accrediting agencies and other entrenched organizations will go to suppress innovation and reform in higher education. High drama unfolds in the collision between reform and tradition, as regional accreditation and state regulatory agencies move to eliminate Sperling’s new venture. Only his understanding of academic politics and his experiences as a social activist enable him to fend off the vicious attacks and collusion of educational bureaucracies.

The account is directly pertinent to the current tendency of some state commissions to impede the introduction of for-profit programs and to the attack by the American Association of University Professors on initiatives that utilize technology-based means of delivering educational programming.

Sperling’s experience illustrates the irony of accreditation and regulatory agencies that for decades have approved the for-profit continuing education divisions of traditional non-profit colleges. Thus, a for-profit component is legitimate as long as it subsidizes a “pure academic” endeavor. But if the for-profit undertaking stands on its own base, as in the case of the University of Phoenix, it is viewed as undermining the perceived

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