

Sample Higher Education General Field Questions on Foundations

1. Between the turn of the 20th century and the turn of the 21st century, higher education in the United States became more complex, diverse, and accessible. Compare and contrast the system of higher education that existed in the United States in 1900 to the system that exists today. How do the systems differ in terms of public and private control; federal and state governance and funding; institutional type, mission and goals; leaders, faculty, students, and key stakeholders; intended outcomes and benefits; and other critical features. Conclude your discussion with speculation about what higher education institutions in the United States might look like in another 100 years, in 2100.
2. Attempts to establish a national university persisted for over 60 years. Though many of the Founding Fathers advocated such a development none has ever emerged. The closest thing to a national university was the establishment of West Point, as a training site for the army. In spite of the fact that there is no national university the federal government has played a pivotal role in the emergence and the development of higher education in the United States. Define and describe the impact of 10 steps of the federal government over our history. (Note: these “steps” could be legislative, executive, or judicial.)
3. The Morrill Land Grant Acts of the 19th century are often described as being the pieces of legislation that led to the opening the door of opportunity for higher education to a broader spectrum of American society. What are the central elements of these pieces of legislation? Identify four other pieces of federal legislation that have impacted in a significant way the system of higher education in the United States. For each act that you cite identify the key players, if you know them, the problem that the legislation was attempting to address, the immediate effect of that legislation, and the impact of that legislation on 21st century higher education.
4. You have been asked by your president to brief a visiting delegation of UNESCO representatives about the system of higher education in the United States. Their interests are *history, governance, access and choice, and variety of educational opportunities*. You will share this responsibility with one other colleague, so you are being asked to address two critical areas. Select two of the four italicized items. In a series of bullet points, elaborate upon each one drawing your thoughts, opinions and evidence from theory, research and practice.
5. The 19th Century saw the rise of higher education in the United States. Institutions were founded in large number. Many persisted; others disappeared. There were individuals both within and outside the colleges and universities who had dramatic impacts on education in that century. Identify six persons whose contributions to the educational system in the United States took place during the 19th century. Describe each individual; identify the institution(s) with which they were connected; indicate how and if appropriate and relevant where their contributions. To what extent are their contributions still relevant today? How?

6. It is often said that the American system of higher education is the most unique, complete, and extensive in the world. While addressing the needs of a very diverse population, higher education institutions in this country address numerous individual, societal and political needs. Identify and discuss the defining characteristics of American Higher Education.
7. Review and discuss the several sources of income available to two- and four-year colleges and universities, public and private. How are the revenue streams similar for the different sectors, and how do they differ? What are the governance implications of multiple sources for financing higher education? Finally, select a particular type of institution (for example, public university, private liberal arts college, community college) and outline what you think is an ideal revenue base.
8. States vary in how they finance higher education and draw from three basic funding mechanisms: a) taxpayer resources, b) tuition, and c) student aid programs. Over the last half-century the ways in which states have financed higher education have changed, resulting in state-level fiscal policies that look quite different today than fifty years ago. Describe and compare the current mix of financial mechanisms utilized by states to the mix of financial mechanisms used fifty years ago, explaining how state policies are different now than a half century ago. Then, discuss the future implications of this financial mix on accessibility and affordability in public four-year colleges and universities as compared to private four-year colleges and universities.
9. Two-year postsecondary institutions are often criticized on the basis of their not measuring up to four-year institutions. Identify the prominent critics of the community college, explain their criticisms along both theoretical and philosophical lines, and discuss the complexities of assessing the success or failure of community colleges on measures historically pertaining to four-year postsecondary institutions.
10. In recent years, government, corporate, and public sectors have increasingly called for accountability in postsecondary education. Choose one area in which accountability is being demanded (e.g. student development, workforce and economic development, public service, basic research). Discuss the issues concerning accountability in this area (including how accountability is defined) in relation two postsecondary sectors (i.e. community college, comprehensive four-year institutions, research university).