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Teaching at the People's University: An Introduction to the State Comprehensive University

Bruce B. Henderson

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Among the different kinds of colleges and universities, those known as regional state universities or state comprehensive universities (SCUs) are the most neglected by higher education scholars. These institutions, many with roots in normal schools and teachers colleges, traditionally have been held in low esteem. Yet a high percentage of students receive college degrees from SCUs each year. In many ways it is these universities that have made college degrees available to children of the lower and middle classes. Moreover, SCUs have been willing to provide practical, job-oriented degrees in many fields from education to the health sciences. The state comprehensive universities have been the people s universities. A high and increasing percentage of America s college professors and administrators work at SCUs, yet there are no available resources specifically directed at newly hired faculty at these institutions. Based on the author s nearly 30 years of experience at SCUs, this book provides new faculty members with a conceptual framework for seeing how their new environment is different from the major research universities where most of them obtained their graduate educations. It discusses the special problems faculty encounter at SCUs, as well as some of the major advantages of working at a comprehensive university over a research university. It also dispels some of the negative and misleading assumptions about academic life at SCUs, helping new faculty avoid role conflict and adapt their expectations to forge rewarding careers that benefit their students and their institutions. Contents include: -Distinctive features of SCUs -History of SCUs -Status and prestige at SCUs -Research and scholarship at SCUs -Academic life at SCUs -Campus community -Threats and opportunities at SCUs -An annotated bibliography of useful literature for new faculty at SCUs

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