

Editorial

Screaming at the Deaf

From time to time, an academic steps forward with an analogy and warning for higher education. Yesterday, it was Byran White, a journalist turned academic: "[Take It From an Ex-Journalist, Adapt or Die.](#)"

Mr. White alerts his academic colleagues that, "We [journalists] never really did [respond to threats to the news industry], at least not sufficiently enough to stem the onslaught of technological advancements, disruption of business models, and shifting consumer preferences that have since conspired to pretty much dismantle newspapers as we knew them." And his conclusion is telegraphed well in advance: If universities can't change, they're doomed.

And now we should expect that academics will be different from moribund journalism? Smarter? More prescient? Circumspect? That individual faculty will overcome their narrow self-interests? And that administrators will become leaders and honest?

Why?

Let me offer an analogy. If you studied the stock market for the past several decades, you'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to see the tech bubble (PE's over 100) and mortgage bubble (banks lending to NINJAs). If you were paying attention, you might not have predicted the exact time of reckoning, but you got out of the stock market soon enough to preserve your capital. For those who've studied universities, the same prospects hold for their current mindless direction. They can't change. I can't predict the exact timing of their demise, at least in their current form, but you'll not recognize what they look like in a decade.