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Alumni Involvement and Long-Termist University Governance

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22.1 The Proposal

The proposal consists in involving former students, or alumni, in university governance. The governing body of the university determines its strategy and its missions and is responsible for financial decisions, audit, estate, and human resources. I suggest that, in order to take long-termist decisions, the governing body should include a significant proportion of current and former students (say, 50 per cent), in addition to professional administrators, faculty members, researchers, and support staff representatives. To be considered an alumnus, one should have graduated in the university. Students and alumni representatives would be democratically elected by those they represent.

Table 22.1 (~~at the end of the chapter~~) sketches a comparison of the benefits of alumni involvement in university governance with the effect of the involvement of other stakeholders (students, professors, emeriti, and other professionals).

22.2 Introduction: What is Long-Termist Higher Education?

How to render higher education institutions more long-termist? Suppose we adopt Rawls's just savings principle as the proper account of intergenerational justice. Each generation should secure the conditions needed to establish and to maintain intact just institutions for the next generations (Rawls 2001: 159). Investments in education and learning are part of the material conditions needed to maintain just institutions over time (Rawls 1999: 252). Following

Table 22.1. Comparison of the benefits of the involvement of different groups of stakeholders

Who could be involved in the governance of University x:	Would involvement increase voluntary donations?	Insider knowledge of University x?	Outsider knowledge?	Organizational identification	Accountability mechanism	Would presence increase student participation?
Alumni (past students of University x)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Current students of University x	No	Yes	No	Stronger if they continue to be involved as alumni	Stronger if alumni are also involved	<i>Does not apply</i>
Current academic staff of University x	No	Yes	No	Stronger if long-term employment	No	No
Emeriti (past academic staff of University x)	Yes (especially volunteering)	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Graduate professionals (past students of University non-x)	No	No	Yes	No, except if long-term employment	No	No

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this account, I shall argue that educational institutions must meet two criteria to be considered as long-termist.

First, long-termist institutions *secure social justice in the future*. To secure a just distribution of advantages, educational institutions must play a key role in securing fair equality of opportunities. They must mitigate as much as they can the effects of social background on students' future economic and social prospects. In addition, prospective citizens should develop a sense of justice and be willing to comply with the rules necessary to implement this distribution. Long-termist educational institutions successfully cultivate the sense of justice, which is supported by political virtues such as tolerance, civility, and reasonableness (Rawls 2013: 194), as well as by a positive attitude towards sustainability (Bell, 2004).

Second, long-termist educational institutions contribute to *positive intergenerational savings* (or at least they should not contribute to dis-savings),¹ including investments in education. Long-termist educational institutions are thus the institutions that are *able to carry out their defined aim*—education and learning—at *reasonable costs* for future generations. These institutions should make sure younger generations actually learn something, and preferably the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are *beneficial for them and for their own descendants*.² The *ability of educational institutions to carry out this aim* obviously depends on the quantity of resources to which they have access. Other things being equal, the more able an educational institution is to find resources, the more long-termist it is. Their ability to educate many students well also depends on how efficiently they spend their resources. Choices of educational policies should maximize the chances that all students learn well. Long-termist educational institutions ought to be designed so as to recruit, train, and monitor teachers and professors with this aim in mind. They should also care about other details, such as **the way students are allocated to** classes. The *costs* these investments involve should be assessed in terms of material, human, and environmental resources. For example, universities that incentivize their staff to regularly travel by plane to attend

¹ For another interpretation of Rawls's principle of just savings, see Gaspart and Gosseries (2007).

² I assume here that the aim of educational institutions is to create human capital (broadly understood) by developing abilities and cultivating skills. But universities might be thought to fulfil another function, a signalling function. This means universities would signal (with credentials) the fact that students already possess abilities and skills they developed and acquired outside of the university (Arrow 1973). This signalling function may contribute to securing the material basis of just institutions by allowing society to find out more easily those who have a good productive potential and to employ them. However, if universities only act as a signalling device, we must make sure prospective workers and citizens develop well their abilities elsewhere, and part of the resources initially devoted to universities should be reallocated to the institutions that really secure the existence of these abilities.

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conferences and meetings (when the academic benefits do not outweigh the environmental costs) behave in a short-termist way.

What a *beneficial education* is should be assessed in terms of personal earnings, access to rewarding and interesting jobs, without forgetting the intrinsic enjoyment of learning and the social benefits of an educated population.³ Higher education should enable those who complete it to develop their earning power, but also to access to non-monetary benefits such as social recognition or the enjoyment of learning. But higher education should also be designed so as to have positive spill-over effects on the younger generations who do not attend universities. I have already mentioned the importance of the cultivation of political and sustainability virtues for justice. But future generations will also need specific knowledge and abilities. If, for instance, the depletion of non-renewable resources is unavoidable, students should learn the skills needed to elaborate and use technologies which may replace these resources.

While assessing higher education institutions against these two criteria, I will assume they possess three distinctive features of contemporary universities. First, they are sufficiently autonomous to be able to decide on academic matters, recruitment, and promotions, how to allocate or invest funding, whether and where to acquire additional sources of funding besides state funding and tuition fees. Second, a significant proportion of each birth cohort is enrolled in higher education (the ‘massification’ phenomenon). Hence the public that attends higher education is likely to be quite heterogeneous in terms of social background, abilities, cultural codes, and expectations. Third, public financial support for higher education is tending to decline, and this trend seems unlikely to change in the next decades.

22.3 How to Render Universities More Long-Termist?

There are many features of universities we could redesign so as to render them more long-termist.⁴ I shall focus mainly on university governance. Governance of higher education institutions can be redesigned so as to render universities more long-termist by screening the composition of the governing board. In this perspective, the rationale for including particular groups of agents in the board is instrumental. Hence the rationale is neither that those who are affected by the decisions should be represented, nor that more

³ On the non-monetary value of education, see, for instance, Brighouse 2005, Nussbaum 2012, Robeyns 2006.

⁴ Funding schemes are also crucial in this respect. On the requirements of justice for higher education funding, see e.g. Bou-Habib 2010, Brighouse 2004, Dietsch 2006, Reiff 2014, Van Parijs 2004.

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democracy in organizations is desirable. The rationale is the potential contribution of these groups to the achievement of intergenerational justice. This is in the spirit of Van Parijs's 'Rawls-Machiavelli programme', which consists in shaping institutions in such a way that they better contribute to achieve justice, and this without relying on the moral improvement of **the** agents (Van Parijs 1998: 299).

The policy proposal this chapter aims to defend is that the inclusion of alumni in university governing boards is likely to make universities better fulfil their intergenerational justice obligations. Past successful examples of alumni involvement in universities have motivated a renewed interest in alumni governance (Gillies 2011; Pietsch 2012). A rather successful example of alumni involvement in university governance was the Latin American *cogobierno* (co-government) model (Arocena and Sutz 2005; Buchbinder 2010; Cabal 1993). How would the involvement of alumni in university governance secure the contribution of universities to the achievement of intergenerational justice?

22.4 Alumni's Financial Support and University Long-Termism

As already explained, long-termist universities ought to be designed so as to *enable them to rely on additional sources of funding* in a time of decreasing public support. A university that includes alumni in its governance is *more able to secure its financial sustainability*, because it **gives it a** better access to alumni donations. A historical example supports this assertion: the Dalhousie Alumni Association supported a massive fundraising campaign at the end of the nineteenth century to rescue the Dalhousie University from a financial disaster (Dalhousie Alumni Association Fonds, cited by Pietsch, 2012). Nowadays, alumni donations are the largest source of donations to American universities (Gottfried and Johnson 2006). British universities received up to £774 million from their alumni in 2011–12 (Coutinho et al. 2014). Currently higher education institutions in Europe and in America are seeking to increase alumni giving through various means: alumni associations, reunion years, newsletters, and direct requests. Alumni support is not only financial, **but** also consists in volunteering and political advocacy (Weerts et al. 2009). Volunteering (the acts of unpaid services to the university) contributes to the financial sustainability of universities **to the extent that university** should have otherwise paid someone to do the job volunteers do for free. Political advocacy, that is, voting, contacting officials, protesting, signing a petition, or convincing **the** family, could increase public support for higher education (Weerts et al. 2009: 348).

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I suggest alumni involvement in university governance is likely to increase alumni's monetary and non-monetary support to their alma mater through the following mechanisms.

(i) *Awareness of needs*: if alumni were involved in the governance of their alma mater, they would be more aware of its financial needs; and awareness of ~~the~~ needs increases support. Studies show the more generous alumni believe their alma mater has important financial needs (Connolly and Blanchette 1986, Diamond and Kashyap 1997, Sun et al. 2007, Taylor and Martin 1995, Weerts and Ronca 2007). ~~And an~~ interview of non-donors reveals non-donors ~~do not~~ believe their alma mater **needs** their support (Wastyn 2009).

(ii) *Facilitation of solicitations*: if alumni were involved in the governance of their alma mater, universities could more easily make informal solicitations to donate or support **the university**; and more solicitation is likely to increase support. Data on alumni giving confirms that maintaining close contacts with alumni increases alumni monetary and non-monetary support (Carlson 1978). Alumni giving is higher during reunion years (Olsen et al. 1989, Wunnava and Lauze 2001). More frequent communications and encouragement of alumni to participate in university affairs could increase the efficacy of fundraising campaigns (Harrison 1995, Hoyt 2004, Pearson 1999: 9, Sun et al. 2007).

(iii) *Perception of efficacy*: if alumni were involved in the governance of their alma mater, they would directly see how their support positively affects the institution; and perception that one's contribution makes a difference increases aid. A review of the literature on charitable giving shows that perceiving that one's contribution will make a difference for the organization increases the likeliness of giving (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011). The interview with non-donors reveals non-donors believe their donations would not make a meaningful difference or are uncertain about how their donation will be used (Wastyn 2009).

(iv) *Reputation*: if alumni were involved in university governance, this would trigger a mechanism of reputation, which itself would increase the probability of charitable giving; alumni would donate more because they would want to be held in high regard by other alumni with whom they would interact more often. There is a correlation between social pressure and donations: peers 'verbally or nonverbally reward donors for giving or punish them for not giving' (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011). This mechanism of reputation could explain Clotfelter's finding that the alumni who are still in touch with other alumni tend to give more or more often to their alma mater (Clotfelter 2003).

Greater reliance of universities on **donations from alumni** may nevertheless have counterproductive effects. A first drawback of alumni involvement is that, if indeed it increases alumni's propensity to give to their alma mater

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instead of to other charities or institutions, this means there will be *an opportunity cost for other important causes*. Intergenerational and intragenerational justice might require the allocation of alumni donations to other organizations, NGOs, and charities.⁵ But this objection rests on two assumptions.

The first assumption is that *justice requires resources to be allocated in priority to other organizations than higher education institutions*. The rationale of the objection might be reconstructed as follows. If resources, including private donations, should be allocated so as to improve the lifetime prospects of the most disadvantaged groups in our society, as Rawls's theory of justice requires, and if increasing the lifetime prospects of the most disadvantaged requires more pressing expenditures than expenditures *in* higher education and research, then resources, including donations, ought to be redirected to these expenditures.⁶ Charitable donations (like public support) should prioritize these more pressing expenditures. If alumni were not involved in university governance, the objection says, they would be less solicited by universities to donate and thus they would be more eager to give to NGOs that aim to eradicate hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and so on. But this is ignoring that NGOs and social policies need research (think about the eradication of pandemics) and highly skilled workers. These are provided by higher education institutions. Recall also that long-termist universities have two aims: securing social justice in the future and contributing to intergenerational savings. Securing social justice requires universities to avoid involving students in programmes that do not cultivate the skills and motivation needed to eradicate poverty and inequalities. Contributing to intergenerational savings might, however, require universities to pursue excellence and knowledge for its own sake, even when the immediate benefits in terms of social justice are not obvious.

The second assumption is that, *if alumni had not given a sum x of money to their alma mater, they would have given exactly the same sum to another organization*, which would supposedly better contribute to the achievement of justice. This assumption is not necessarily true. Charitable giving is strongly tied to one's sense of identification to the organization (Brady et al. 2002, Mael and Ashforth 1992). If alumni do not identify with another organization than their alma mater, the time and money they give to support it would have otherwise been spent on ~~other activities and~~ personal consumption.

A second drawback may be explained as follows. If university administrators are aware of the effects of alumni participation in governance on their

⁵ I thank two anonymous reviewers for having pointed out this objection to me.

⁶ This is indeed a reason non-donors give for justifying the fact that they do not donate to their alma mater (Wastyn 2009).

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generosity, they will want to rely more on this additional source of funding. Since the individual determinants of alumni generosity can be predicted to some extent, and since today's students are the future alumni, university administrators might be tempted to change their admission policy so as to make sure they select those who are the most likely to become generous alumni.⁷ Alumni financial support is positively correlated with alumni income (e.g. Baade and Sundberg 1996, Clotfelter 2003, Marr et al. 2005, Monks 2003, Tsao and Coll 2005).⁸ Universities could thus try to attract the students that are the most likely to become rich alumni, who are either students that come from a wealthy family or students that opt for income-generating programmes, such as law or business majors. Such admission policies are not in line with social justice. Admission preferences for students from wealthy background is incompatible with fair equality of opportunities. Admission preferences for law and business students is also unwelcome from the perspective of justice, since the jobs that are the most needed to secure justice are the not so well paid jobs in sectors such as health, education, social work, or environmental sciences.

Although this is a real challenge to alumni involvement, three considerations limit the scope of the problem. First, admission policies are to a fair extent constrained by public legislation, which often bans prohibitive fees (in public universities) as well as discrimination. Second, rational university administrators should also look at the likeliness of alumni's non-monetary contributions. For example, volunteering requires a lot of free time, a resource those who hold a high-income job do not have. Third, if universities were tempted to adopt a high fees policy (wherever it is legal) so as to screen the wealthiest students, they might lose the opportunities of receiving donations from students who have not been discouraged from studying despite the high fees and who take up a loan. In a context of massification, students from middle-class backgrounds will not so easily give up higher education. And evidence shows a 'loan resentment' among graduate negatively affects future donations. Those who accumulate debt from student loans are much less likely to make donations than those who got either parental help or grants (e.g. Clotfelter 2003, Marr et al., 2005 Meer and Rosen 2012, Monks 2003). Hence universities should think twice before setting prohibitive fees to screen the wealthiest students.

⁷ This is the kind of solution Baade and Sundberg (1996) suggest universities should consider.

⁸ Alumni financial support is also positively correlated with having children or relatives attending the institution too (e.g. Clotfelter 2003, Mael and Ashforth 1992, Meer and Rosen 2009). Hence university administrators might give preference to alumni children.

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22.5 Why Former Insiders Can Make a Non-Financial Difference Too

The mechanism described relies on the fact that, in many places, alumni are potential donors. But the specific contribution of alumni is not only material. Alumni are *former insiders*. As *insiders*, they know the university well. As *former members*, they do not have immediate stakes in it any more. Involving former insiders in governance should make us rather optimistic that they will orient university policies towards the preservation of its reputation and quality. Insofar as the reputation of a university is correlated to the real quality of the education and the research it provides, and insofar as educational and research quality themselves contribute to valuable investments in education for future generations, the involvement of former insiders is a long-termist policy.

As former insiders, alumni could contribute to the quality of ~~the~~ decisions by providing *relevant information*. Alumni know how their university works from the inside. They know what it was like to be a student in this university. Moreover, as current participants in the economy and the civil society, they also know what the outcomes of the education they received are. To fulfil the goal of providing the next generation with an education that enhances their opportunities to live well, universities need information about former students' income and personal satisfaction. Without such information, universities may make the following educational mistakes: aiming too high or too low regarding the academic level of the degrees the university offers, offering obsolete degrees, educating too many or not enough students (e.g. Trannoy 2006: 756). Alumni involvement in university governance would render universities more long-termist because alumni representatives would deliver the exact information universities need to avoid these mistakes. Even if a fraction of alumni were interested in participating in university governance, this fraction would suffice **if** it represents a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and opinions on the kind of education younger generations need to live well.

This is not to say alumni have access to *all* the information long-termist universities need. With respect to educational decisions, current students also **possess important** information, that is, they know their own personal abilities and thus might have a better idea of how these can be matched to job opportunities.⁹ However, current students may have an inaccurate appreciation of the prospects the current job market could offer to them. Involving both representatives of students *and* of alumni in the board

⁹ I thank an anonymous reviewer for this point.

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should thus enable universities to gather all the needed information. What makes the alumni perspective invaluable to improve higher education is that they simultaneously possess an ‘insider’s’ and an ‘outsider’s’ knowledge of the university. The conjunction of insider and outsider knowledge distinguishes alumni from both students (who only have an insider knowledge) and other professionals (who only have an outsider knowledge insofar as most of them attended a higher education institution, but not necessarily the specific institution where they are employed).

In addition to their knowledge, as former insiders, alumni have specific motivations that justify their inclusion in the board. If current members of the university are not spontaneously motivated to act upon intergenerational justice principles, by way of remedy we should build on the dispositions of those who are less likely to be driven by self-interested motives. This is Philip Pettit’s Complier-Centred Strategy (Pettit, 1996: 78). This strategy says that institutional designers should first explore the ways they can screen decision-makers before considering sanctions against those who do not comply with the rules or, in the case I deal with, principles of justice. This strategy may **advocate** the involvement of alumni in the board because, given alumni’s characteristic motivations, we can be somehow optimistic that they will promote the general interest of the university rather than their own.

Note that, to some extent, alumni have an interest in preserving the quality of their university, since their social and economic opportunities are tied to the reputation of their former university, especially at the earliest stages of their career. Contrary to current students and staff, alumni can’t exit from their alma mater. Students can choose to graduate from another university, and academics’ career opportunities depend on the reputation of their own alma mater and on their own personal academic achievements.

Moreover, alumni have another, less self-interested motive, to care for their alma mater’s reputation. Alumni have a sense that they belong to their alma mater. It is not only that the reputation of their alma mater is instrumental to their own personal achievements. It is that, according to social identity theory, individual identity is in part defined by the identity of the groups in which individuals classify themselves (Tajfel and Turner 2004). This applies to alumni, who identify themselves with their former university and who demonstrate this identification by supporting their former university (Mael and Ashforth 1992). Since alumni tend to identify the successes and ~~the~~ failures of their alma mater with their own, they are likely to use their share of the decision-making power to make sure the reputation and the interests of the university as an organization are preserved. It is also worth mentioning that the more students are involved in **the policymaking of universities**, the more alumni are likely to develop such organizational identification. We can thus see there is a second argument in favour of involving students alongside

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alumni in the governing board. The first argument I mentioned in the preceding section stated that students can bring a specific informational input, that is, knowledge of their own abilities and how these match the demands of the labour market. My second argument is that the earlier alumni are involved in the governance of their alma mater, the more likely they will develop a sense of identification with their alma mater. It would thus be far-sighted to involve them by the time they are still students.

As former insiders, alumni have a third-party perspective, since they have no specific stakes in the organization any more. If they are allowed to participate in university governance, they might act as arbitrators if conflicts arise. This could also limit other stakeholders' ability to use the university as a mere means to serve their own interests.

Let us mention that emeriti (former professors) share some of the characteristics just described. They have insider knowledge. They might identify with the institution as well. And they do not see the university as a means for their career or their projects any more. However, they do not have the outsider knowledge. Neither do they have the experience of what it is like to be a student in this specific institution. But we could still consider the inclusion of some emeriti in the board on the basis of organizational identification.

This being said, there are two objections to consider. One could suspect some alumni might be subject to the 'elderly bias'. Long-termism requires decision-makers to be concerned with the younger generations' interests. Positive correlations between demographic ageing and lower expenditures in education have led some to conclude that there is indeed an elderly bias. Self-interested voters would prefer more public spending on healthcare and pension systems and less on education (Cattaneo and Wolter 2009, Poterba 1996, Vanhuysse 2013). This could be a problem for our proposal since alumni are typically older than students. However, the evidence coming from the empirical literature on the elderly's spending preferences is mixed. A recent study based on data from twenty-two countries has shown that the elderly's preferences for low levels of education spending might be explained by a cohort effect rather than by an age effect (Sørensen 2013). This could be because younger cohorts are more educated. Hence they value education spending more. Long-standing residents in a community seem also to be more willing to spend on education than newly arrived ones (Berkman and Plutzer 2004). It is therefore inaccurate to assert that it is because of their age that elderly people come to prefer less public education spending. The level of education and existing emotional bonds with a community matter too. Moreover, the very assumption that older electors are self-interested is disputed. Empirical evidence suggests that older people tend to be more altruist and to care more about the public good than the young (Freund and Blanchard-Fields 2013). We can thus respond to the elderly bias objection by pointing out

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that alumni's lifecycle interest in less education spending should be attenuated by the value they probably attach to education, their loyalty to their alma mater, and their altruism.

There is a variant of the elderly bias in higher education. Experienced university administrators seem more short-termist than inexperienced ones because they learn to distrust monetary promises (Logue and Anderson 2001). Alumni being more experienced than students, their decisions could also be distorted. However, if these short-termist decisions are due to the fact that administrators generally do not receive the money promised for universities, the problem is not that administrators react (appropriately) to such an environment. The problem is this environment itself. Within such an environment, distrusting monetary promises might be the most long-termist attitude.

Another way in which alumni could use the university as a means to pursue personal interests pertains to some alumni's interests in using the university as a means to promote ideologies or conceptions of the good life. Some alumni might thus use their influence to limit academic freedom. Alumni who belong to churches, associations, political parties, or firms may try to promote these groups' interests rather than mere intellectual interests when deciding which research project to support or which professor to hire. For instance, the Forbes family threatened Princeton University to withdraw its donations if the university hired the philosopher Peter Singer.¹⁰ This is a problem for the perspective of intergenerational justice if, as John Stuart Mill said of freedom of thought, academic freedom increased opportunities to 'exchange error for truth' or to strengthen existing truths by challenging them (Mill 1859: II).

This problem could be addressed by designing the governing institutions of universities in such a way that decisions strictly related to academic activities and research are taken by a separate committee, that is, the Academic Board. The Board of Governors would be responsible for administrative decisions, such as where to raise and how to allocate material resources (including salaries). The Academic Board would be responsible for decisions on the content of research and education. But not involving alumni at all in the Academic Board could be a loss with respect to educational decisions, since alumni bring information that could help universities to improve their educational (and perhaps also their research) policies. A possible way out of the problem could be the following: alumni representatives could have a *decisive* voice in the Board of Governors, and they could be given a *consultative* voice in the Academic Board.¹¹

¹⁰ I owe this example to an anonymous reviewer.

¹¹ This seems to be a weak protection against pressures such as the Forbes family's one. But another way to alleviate such pressure is to increase the number of alumni who donate so as to

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22.6 Alumni Presence and University Long-Termism

The mechanism described relies on the cognitive and affective dispositions we can reasonably ascribe to alumni. But, apart from these dispositions, their mere *presence* could affect the behaviours and attitudes of the two other groups of stakeholders, that is, students and staff, in a way that is beneficial for intergenerational justice.

First, if a long-termist higher education institution is an institution that educates well the younger generations at reasonable costs, and if achieving this goal conflicts with the interests of faculty members (who might, for instance, want to focus more on research) or of university administrators (who might, for instance, seek to spend less on education), then the design of governance should alter their behaviours so as to make their decisions coincide with the requirements of long-termism. In this section, I suggest that the mere presence of alumni in the governing board would affect the behaviours and decisions of university staff (faculty and administrators) in this desired way. The presence of alumni would make the professionals feel more accountable for their decisions to the younger generations.

Academics **may be** influenced by a mix of motives, including the quest for personal financial gain, the quest for status and peer recognition, as well as intrinsic valuation of learning and teaching (Brennan and Pettit 1991). Most academics are certainly inclined to teach well, but they often end up spending more time **in** research or social activities, which are more likely to bring about academic prestige, and which in many places enjoy better recognition from higher education administrations and funds. The expected future presence of alumni in the board could induce higher education professionals to shift their primary area of focus from the activities that bring prestige to the activities that secure the next generation's opportunities to live well. Knowing that alumni would participate in governance and scrutinize their decisions would drive professionals to care more about the quality of the education they deliver and the social benefits of the research they carry on. The presence of alumni would thus perform the function of an accountability mechanism. How can we expect the presence of alumni to trigger a shift of focus from academic prestige to educational improvements (for instance)? Existing evidence shows that universities that invest more in instruction tend to receive more donations from their alumni (Baade and Sundberg 1996). This means that, unsurprisingly, alumni are better disposed towards universities which

avoid dependence on a unique source of funding. In addition, let us not forget this discussion takes place in a context of decreasing public financial support: even if reliance on alumni donations was more susceptible to limiting academic freedom than public support, universities might not have a better alternative in the near future.

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cared for their interests as students. Higher education professionals could anticipate this and thus focus more on educational improvements.

Is alumni involvement necessary to secure such an *accountability mechanism*? One might suggest income-contingent loans would perform exactly the same function.¹² With income-contingent loans, higher education would be free at the point of delivery, and graduates would later fund higher education in proportion of their income. The revenues from the tax each graduate pays could be directly allocated to the graduate's alma mater (Trannoy 2006). Universities would thus have a strong incentive to provide students with an education that is valuable on the market. This incentive structure could also trigger a shift from academic prestige to educational improvements.

However, I would favour alumni involvement over income-contingent loans for the following reasons. First, universities are not the unique determinant of their graduate's economic success or failure: parental network and personal talents are also to be taken into account (Brighouse 2004: 9). Second, income-contingent loans only account for the *financial* and *individual* gains of higher education. But some graduates are happy with less-paid jobs that bring about many personal benefits (such as free time, enjoyment, or the pursuit of personal values). And higher education can bring about social benefits that are not related to graduates' individual earnings.

Students are the second group of stakeholders whose behaviour could be modified by alumni involvement in university governance. Student participation in university governance contributes to long-termism in at least two ways. First, students are in a good position to assess the educational experience they get and how it matches their own preferences and abilities. Their participation could thus improve the quality of higher education (McGrath 1970: 57, Thompson 1972: 160). Second, justice requires educational institutions to prepare the young generations for citizenship (Gutmann 1987, Rawls 2013: 200). Student participation enables them to cultivate the knowledge and the skills associated with the exercise of citizenship (McGrath 1970: 53, Thompson 1972: 162). Students would have the opportunity to improve their knowledge of the educational system and the political skills associated with negotiation and deliberation. Currently, student involvement is not always as successful as one might hope, since the turnout of students is very low. Short-term involvement in the organization is one of the factors that might explain the low turnouts in student elections and the fact that only a small minority of students are active in university politics. If students knew they could continue to participate in their university, then they might become more interested in university affairs.

¹² I thank an anonymous reviewer for having pointed out this alternative suggestion to me.

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The rationale of this argument can be clarified through an analogy between students and migrants. If a migrant comes to spend five years in a foreign country and then goes back to her country of origin, she is less likely to develop an interest in the public affairs in her host country than if she knew she would spend her life in it. By analogy, if students are to spend four or five years in the university, we should not be surprised that most students do not feel very concerned by university affairs. Whereas if they knew they would stay connected with their alma mater **over** their life, more of them would feel concerned **in** university affairs. Therefore, we may expect alumni involvement to have a positive effect on the participation of students in university affairs.

22.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered both a definition of what a long-termist higher education institution is and a case for alumni involvement as a way to render higher education institutions more long-termist. This case relies on a set of mechanisms that can be summarized as follows:

- Alumni involvement would facilitate alumni donations; a better reliance on additional sources of funding would improve the capacity of universities to carry out their mission at reasonable costs.
- Alumni involvement would give universities access to the information they need to educate well the younger generations, since alumni know both how **the** university works and what kind of higher education is likely to increase the younger generations' opportunities to live well.
- Alumni involvement would secure the preservation of the reputation and ~~the~~ quality of the university, since, as former insiders, alumni tend to identify their interests to those of their alma mater.
- Alumni involvement would work as an accountability mechanism, since the expected presence of alumni in the board would induce professionals to better take into account younger generations' interests in their decisions.
- Alumni involvement would increase student participation in university politics; greater student participation develops students' abilities to exercise citizenship.

Two concluding remarks are in order. First, this proposal, though designed for higher education institutions, can inspire the design of the governance of other types of educational institutions. After all, many children will not go to

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university. But the education they receive should also be connected to the demands of intergenerational justice. Second, since the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on empirical hypotheses, the aim of this chapter is also to set a possible agenda for empirical research to check these hypotheses.¹³

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¹³ On this role of political philosophy, see Schouten and Brighouse (2015). I would like to thank Iñigo González Ricoy and Axel Gosseries, the editors, as well as two anonymous referees, for extremely helpful written comments on previous drafts. This chapter also owes a lot to discussions with Thomas Ferretti, Thomas Michiels, Pierre-Etienne Vandamme, and Ivo Wallimann-Helmer. The remaining errors are my own.

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