

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The seed of my interest in educational philosophy and experimentation was planted during my middle school years at the Newark Center for Creative Learning, where I encountered two of my first formative educators, Mike Edwards and Ray Magnani. It sprouted a few years later when I opened my copy of the Yale *Blue Book* to find an essay on the purposes of liberal learning. This interest became a calling during my doctoral work at Columbia under the supervision of René Arcilla, a sophisticated thinker who nonetheless always kept faith with his inner sophomore. René not only helped shape my thinking about humane learning, but also introduced me to the texts and contexts that spurred me to deepen my own liberal education. I am grateful to René and others, including Maxine Greene, Robbie McClintock, and David Blacker, for providing living proof that scholarship can and should be a voiced expression of one's provisional judgments and ongoing searches. Though David, René, and I have not yet launched our Black Mountain, the exciting turn in David's work—and his timely posing to me of Billy Bragg's question—helped me peek out of the matrix and transform my experience of the university. Watching René, Maxine, Robbie, and David, in their different ways, gather and maintain the courage of their convictions has helped me learn to better detect and stand behind my own gleams of light.

I began this book at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and completed it at Boston College (BC). Arriving in Urbana in 2006, I could not imagine that I would go on to develop such pride in and loyalty to Illinois. UIUC boasts the rare college of education with an unbroken commitment to humanistic educational scholarship (constantly renewed by the efforts of stalwarts such as Jim Anderson, Nick Burbules, and Yoon Pak). Through the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, and the Campus Faculty Association, I also found a warm welcome into a vibrant, interdisciplinary, faculty community. I was fortunate to be able to talk and teach, imagine and organize with

colleagues such as (the late) Nancy Abelmann, Liora Bresler, Tim Bretl, Chip Bruce, Antoinette Burton, Wally Feinberg, Dan Gilbert, Lauren Goodlad, Rochelle Gutierrez, Chris Lubinski, Anke Pinkert, and Valleri Robinson. And it was at UIUC that I rediscovered my love of undergraduate education. Even as Illinois gave me a good look at the pathologies of the modern multi-versity, it restored my faith in institutions.

I came to BC in 2019 to join its effort to re-center questions of meaning, purpose, and value in the educational conversation. I found a university truly committed to the holistic development of its students, faculty, and staff, one eager to unfold new dimensions of its rich Ignatian tradition in response to a changing world. It has been cheering to work alongside such formative fellow-travelers as Andrew Basler, Biz Bracher, Cristiano Casalini, Sam Deane, David Goodman, Tomeu Estelrich, Greg Fried, Burt Howell, Micah Lott, Erik Owens, Mike Sacco, Martin Scanlan, Scott Seider, Dennis Shirley, and Elizabeth Shlala. The Lynch School of Education and Human Development (LSEHD), led by Dean Stanton Wortham, catalyzes and supports work that has intellectual depth, moral integrity, and creative life. In 2020, we created a new undergraduate major, Transformative Educational Studies, that attempts to embody the experiential and experimental ethos outlined in *Undeclared*; and in 2022, we launched a new Department of Formative Education to advance the interdisciplinary, humane study of the education of whole persons for lives of meaning and purpose. I want to thank LSEHD and BC not only for this spur to innovate but also for supporting my scholarship, including with a semester sabbatical that was crucial to the completion of *Undeclared*.

During the book's long gestation, opportunities to share work in progress were invaluable. I developed the kernel of the book (what grew into "Campus Tour," "Soul Action," and "New Student Orientation") across a series of presentations. Thanks to Joseph McAlhany and the Great Ideas program for the invitation to present a first sketch at Carthage College in 2013 (unfortunately, as if to illustrate my argument, Carthage has since shut the door on Great Ideas, along with the Departments of Classics and Philosophy). The 2015 AERA Philosophy of Education SIG Invited Lecture was the perfect occasion to flesh out the argument, which I further developed in presentations at two BC conferences: "Tracking Development Toward Living a Life of Meaning and Purpose" (2017) and "Formative Education: Mapping the Terrain" (2019) (thanks to Henry Braun, Stanton Wortham,

Cristiano Casalini, and Dennis Shirley, for these invitations). I got to test out my critique of Gen Ed in a presentation to UIUC's Higher Education Collaborative in 2019 (thanks to Jennifer Delaney). And I was excited to share a finished portion of "Soul Action" at the 2021 Psychology and the Other conference (thanks to David Goodman).

"Public Hearing" is a distillation and revision of an earlier paper, "The Death Spiral of Contemporary Public Higher Education," which I had the opportunity to workshop at Illinois State University and to present at Eastern Illinois University (thanks to Gina Schouten and the Spencer Foundation; and to C. C. Wharram and the EIU Humanities Center). This version was published as Chris Higgins, "The Death Spiral of Contemporary Public Higher Education," *Thresholds in Education* 41, no. 3 (2018) (thanks to guest editors Jess Heybach and Eric Sheffield).

I was able to test out the argument of "Job Prospects" in two presentations, one at Loyola University Chicago in 2018 (thanks to Amy Shuffelton) and the other at LSEHD in 2019. The kind invitation to keynote the 2019 meeting of the North Eastern Philosophy of Education Society gave me the chance to refine it.

I first wrote about Black Mountain College in a short piece that framed up some of the main themes of *Undeclared*: Chris Higgins, "From the Editor: Undeclared," *Educational Theory* 67, no. 3 (2017). I am grateful for the invitation to present portions of "Wide Awake" as keynotes at the 2021 Simposio Internacional de Filosofía de la Educación at the University of Navarra and at the 2022 Korean Philosophy of Education Society meeting at Seoul National University. Thanks also to Paul Standish for inviting me to share this work in the PESGB Wednesday Seminar Series in 2023. A Spanish translation of the first keynote was published as Chris Higgins, "Renovando la imaginación educativa en el Black Mountain College," trans. T. Alonso-Sainz, in *Retos actuales de la acción educativa: Carácter y personalidad*, ed. J. A. Ibáñez-Martín & C. Naval (Narcea, 2022) (thanks to Tania Alonso for her attention to the text).

I also owe a big thanks to those who have helped to move *Undeclared* into print: my wonderful editor at the MIT Press, Susan Buckley; sharp copy-editor, Susan Campbell; and attentive project manager, Rashmi Malhotra. Thanks also to Harrison Mullen for his labors in framing up the first draft of the index, and to Bella Otoka for proofing it.

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Shuffelton, who all read sections/versions of “Soul Action.” I lost my most loyal hiking companion, Betty Nella Biscuit Burns Higgins, right as the book moved into production—as I hint in the text, it was Betty who taught me the meaning of *le sentiment de l’existence*. I am grateful to four friends of my work—René Arcilla, Kevin Gary, Megan Laverty, and Rachel Wahl—who generously read and commented on a complete draft. More recently, Kathleen Knight-Abowitz, Chris Martin, Susan Verducci Sandford, and Bryan Warnick dove in to the proofs to help craft a panel proposal. Working through aspects of *Undeclared*—and my struggles to complete it—with Alexandra Woods was invaluable. And I could not have written this book without Jennifer Burns. Jen supports my writing in many ways, including always serving as my first reader. For decades, she has been a true friend to my search for and enactment of vocation.

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Undeclared

A Philosophy of Formative Higher Education

By: Chris Higgins

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