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WEBINAR

WHAT UNIVERSITIES OWE DEMOCRACY

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. KAMARCK: Good morning, everyone and welcome to Brookings for the event called What Universities Owe Democracy.

This morning it is my honor to welcome Ronald Daniels, a distinguished educator with a long career in educational leadership. And he is currently the 14th president of Johns Hopkins University, the author of four books. And today he is with us to discuss his latest book called *What Universities Owe Democracy*.

Before we go to Ron, I'd like to just point out that if you want to submit a question do so by emailing events@brookings.edu or via Twitter at @BrookingsGov by using #StrengtheningDemocracy, okay? So hopefully, you will submit some questions and we will have a short discussion with Ron and then get to your questions.

So, Ron, today I want to walk through your book a little bit, okay? It's a book that couldn't come too soon. It's in the last decade, we've seen a democratic recession around the world and the biggest threat to our own democracy in the history of the country and that, of course, was on January 6th.

It has prompted many of us here at Brookings and at other places to concentrate on what exactly it takes to strengthen a democracy and to understand what makes a healthy democracy. Your book is invaluable to those of us who are in the fight to protect democracy. As far as I can see, it proceeds in four parts. Colleges and universities are essentially to liberal democracy. They didn't always take on this role. It's something that's come over time. And in recent decades there's some faltering in this role.

And finally, as institutions, universities are inexorably intertwined with democracy and they have a responsibility to act in defense of democracy. So let's break down the pieces of this. And take a look at some of the arguments you make in the book.

The first thing you do is you link universities to the achievement of the

American dream and to upward mobility. And you argue that upward educational mobilities exerts an even firmer grasp on American society than socioeconomic mobility. And then you go onto explain the history of college admissions and with a particular emphasis, which I love on legacy admissions.

Talk to us about what happened to college admissions and why you see legacy admissions as so damaging to the democratic ideal.

MR. DANIELS: Well, first, let me just say how thrilled I am to be here and to be able to have a chance to chat with you about some of these issues.

And, you know, in particular as I've been thinking a lot about the role of universities and colleges and undergirding our democratic system of governance. You think about us as one side of institutions, but you are aware that there are hosts of other institutions like think tanks, like Brookings, for instance, that play an absolutely indispensable role as well.

So it's really wonderful to be able to be here and to be able to converse with you as a representative of an institution that I have a great deal of respect for. It's informed a lot of your working papers and studies over the years that have formed a lot of my research. So this is a distinct honor.

So having said that when you think about the role of college admissions, you know that it is an important part of the story of how we give people the opportunity to transcend their circumstances. And there's, you know, a clear understanding that if you get a university education it's not only that you get access to enhanced earning power but you get enhanced access to a host of different benefits.

You're much less likely to be unemployed, to go through periods of unemployment than someone who does not have a college education. Your life expectancy increases. Your sense of happiness, family stability and a host of different dimensions, it's

absolutely clear that this is a very valuable and profound intervention that changes dramatically the trajectory of one's life.

So given how important this is, the question is how are we doing as a system in ensuring broad access? And in particular being true to the Jeffersonian idea of equal opportunity to the notion that the most meritorious among us in our country are given access to this opportunity where they can take maximum advantage of this.

And for decades, I think one can very persuasively make the case that high education was really effective in broadening access to low- and middle-income students. From the college boom in the first half of the 19th century to the expansion of public land grant universities in the 20th century to visionary legislation like the passage of the GI bill and the Higher Education Act.

Colleges and universities with vigorous federal and state support made a world class education available for millions. But having said that we could see that starting in the 1980s something started to shift in this country. And that was an era that really marked a tightening of access. One defined by entrenched divides between the haves and the have nots at the academy.

And a gulf has widened between well-resourced schools for the wealthy and struggling and lower quality schools for the poor. And as a result, many parts of the academy have become places of entrenched privilege. As of a few years ago and this is a staggering statistic. Nearly 40 selective universities enrolled more students from the top one percent of incomes than the bottom 60 percent of incomes. I mean that's a staggering statistic and really gives lie to the idea of equal opportunity being properly vindicated in this country.

Now, some of this has occurred as a result of squeezed budgets and diminished aid. State support for higher education was cut between 1992 and 2010. And it

is, in truth, in real terms only recovered slightly since. Federal support for higher education has stagnated and I'm encouraged that the president in his recent budget has proposed a doubling of policy assistance.

But in the 1970s, the Pell grant covered almost 70 percent of the average cost of college attendance. And today, at current levels, it covers only about 25 percent. So one after another universities in this era have announced the reversal of the knee blind admission policies in the wake of financial uncertainty.

And, you know, there's things that universities are doing quite apart from the recede of federal assistance or state assistance that has, I think compounded the problem. And one of them is the one that you referred to a few moments ago and that's legacy admissions where essentially this is a policy where colleges give an advantage in the admissions process to children or grandchildren of alumni.

And since the children of alumni are far more likely than their peers to be wealthy and white, legacy admissions amount to immobility large as policy with universities placing a thumb on the scale for students solely because of their privileged position of the standing of their parents or their grandparents. And this, of course, comes after a whole host of other benefits that these kids have received in terms of more stable families, higher incomes, better neighborhoods, better schools, better opportunities. All the things that we know come with the receipt of a college education.

And so, the advantages are really quite significant. One 2004 study estimated that legacy status afforded applicants to highly selective universities and admission boost equivalent to about 160 SAT points out of 1,600. So, you know, universities value deeply the contributions and the commitments of their alumni. But what we have discovered is that alumni also along for their institutions to be places where they are connected to ideals of mobility, equal opportunity and the embodiments of merit for all

talented students.

It isn't just about can you get my kid in? It's also something more than that. And here, we speak from -- at least I speak from experience. In 2009, our university had a legacy program in place so that we were among these institutions as putting the thumb on the scale for students who were the children or grandchildren of alumni. And in 2009, our university had more legacy students in its freshman class. About 12.5 percent of the class than students who were eligible for Pell grants, nine percent. So you just -- you see in very clear terms this trade off.

And we ended legacy admissions quietly in 2014. We announced that publicly a few years later after we knew the experiment had worked. But by 2020, these numbers were dramatically reversed. 4.2 percent of first year students had a legacy connection to the university, but to say that they had a legacy connection, they were in no way the beneficiary of any particular preference. They just got in on their own merits.

And 20.5 percent of the class was Pell eligible. And over the same period, the percent of first generation in our incoming classes has more than doubled from seven to 16 percent. So, you know, college admissions are a zero-sum game. If you want to open up more opportunities for students of disadvantage, you've got to think of about whether you're doing things that whether intentionally or not are systematically creating barriers to their involvement and unfairly advantaging other students.

And again, I think legacies is such a dramatic, and in truth, indefensible practice that really needs to go in this age.

MS. KAMARCK: You know, just legacies for a minute. I've heard college administrators argue that the reason for legacy admissions is to build this sort of familial affection for the institution, which then results in sort of long-term financial support. Is there anything to that?

MR. DANIELS: So, you know, that's the best argument you could make. And, you know, just to give its fullest expression, it is. You know, this is a wonderful way of doing great things for less advantaged students because you create this coterie of donors and they're able to -- because of their affection, they're going to give more and transfer funds to low-income students and so it goes.

And look, you know, first and foremost, when we ended legacies, quite apart from the enormous philanthropy that we had been the beneficiary of from Mike Bloomberg who of course $1.8 billion gift, an unprecedent gift.

MS. KAMARCK: He did?

MR. DANIELS: Yeah. Allowed us to support financially. But even if you take out Mike Bloomberg's amazing giving to John Hopkins, the level of alumni support for the university has increased, not decreased in a time in which we reversed legacy preferences.

And in some sense, you know, Mike's story is a powerful statement of what one individual who came in without any legacy connections. Came from a distinctly middle-class family. What his affection and commitment was able to do to the institution. So as much as you can focus, you know, those obvious students who have enjoyed and their families have enjoyed intergenerational privilege.

You know, it turns out that a person like Mike -- and there's lots of stories like this -- who really experience firsthand what it means to be a first gen student at university and how that changed their life. And the level of affection turns out can also be manifested in very significant ways for the university.

I should say, you know, at a university like MIT, which has decades not had legacy admissions seems to be doing pretty well in terms of their developing campaign despite that. And maybe, in fact, it's because of this commitment. So I think there's a shift

here that could be effected and need not damage the alumni support.

MS. KAMARCK: And there's one other thing before we go onto the next that struck me. Is the ups and downs in SATs and use of standardized tests. Can you talk about that because it seems to go -- it seems to have been in waves in terms of people's dependence on it? Where do you come out on standardized tests?

MR. DANIELS: So, you know what? It's a great and it's a very important question for the moment because we're going through another -- as you say, we're in another moment where we're thinking fundamentally the value of ACT and SAT testing. And we have been through the -- we like so many other institutions through the pandemic have been test optional.

And, you know, we're finding that a significant percentage of our students still take standardized testing but increasingly there's a, you know, there's a group of applicants that aren't. And I think in some ways what it is -- what that is a result of it's not just simply reflecting the problems with administering the test in a pandemic environment.

There is a lot of literature on the bias of standardize testing. The extent to which it really unfairly disadvantages students from certain backgrounds. And so, it's an imperfect proxy. But I will say, on the other hand, I'm ambivalent about this because, you know, I come from Canada and, you know, there is no standardized testing.

And many have seen this as one of the great strengths of the Canadian system is you just basically get in on your high school grades. And, you know, relatively modest supplementary information. And at one level, that looks simpler and more attractive.

But on the other hand, what it has also meant is that, you know, in the way that the privileged tend to be very effective at ensuring a good leg up for their kids is there has been, you know, a steady growth over the years in high schools in Canada which cater to the affluent which basically just ensure that the kids are going graduate with staggering

grades. And without a standardized test to be able to level it, you're compromised. So it's not a simple issue to resolve.

And what's even interesting now and I see a dynamic in all of this. I was just talking to my director of admission yesterday saying there's now a movement underfoot at the SAT to really rethink the test and try and respond to a lot of the frailties that have been pitted against it. And even to shorten the test. Take out certain sections where the concerns of bias have been most acute. So, you know, this is very much I think a story in progress.

MS. KAMARCK: I know I heard stories how back in the 1930s and '40s, early standardized tests asked you questions about opera and things like that.

MR. DANIELS: Right.

MS. KAMARCK: That, you know, no lower-class kid was going to know about.

MS. KAMARCK: Clearly. Right. Okay. So let's go onto, you know, sort of the second big theme in the book, which is that democracies cannot exist without good citizens.

And universities play a critical role in the creation of citizens. So how did universities come to play this role? I think that's a sort of fascinating story. And then what's happened to the education of Americans as citizens in recent decades to change that role?

And then I want to ask you about the democracy requirement and tell you a little story about what seems to be happening to us here at Brookings. But fill us in about universities and citizen education.

MR. DANIELS: So it's a really important area as one thinks about how you build successful democracies. And it starts with a recognition that being a good citizen, understanding what are the obligations of citizenship, understanding how government

operates. The rationales for government, the role of liberal democracy. This idea that it is simultaneously serving the goals of equality and freedom.

All of these things, you know, are not inherited traits. It's not like you naturally become a good citizen. You have to educate for it. And so, then the question is who's responsible for conferring that education on young citizens? And here, you know, research on sort of education has born up clearly the claim that educational institutions, not surprisingly, played a critical role in the formation of good democratic citizens.

In fact, the data shows that the most healthy and prosperous liberal democracies are also the countries which have the most robust civic education levels and international exams. And here, you know, clearly part of the responsibility, a major part of the responsibility, resides with K-12 education. But also, universities can play a critical role.

And, you know, in the United States one of the things that I become quite concerned about is the fact that if you look at the percentage of students who have had a meaningful exposure to civic education and understand the nature of government, the rationales for a democracy as opposed to authoritarian structures of government and so forth, and think about the kinds of skills and competencies they need to thrive in it.

It turns out that only about 25 percent of high school students in the United States are graduating with any grasp of these issues, without any exposure. And so, the fact that, you know, more than 70 percent of students graduating from high school will go onto post-secondary education. At least to my mind, that while we're trying to fix the K-12 problem which must be fixed. We have an important role to play even if remedial in ensuring that students are not leaving our institutions without these skills.

And so, it's here that if you look at, you know, the ways in which so many different political thinkers, elected officials have thought about universities, it's absolutely clear that they understood the importance of higher education to citizenship training. And

nearly all of the founding fathers, in fact, had that understanding.

James Madison tried to put a federal university actually into the -- write it into the constitution. George Washington fought tirelessly to build a national university to teach Republican principles. In fact, devoting much of his first state of the union to that very proposal. And Thomas Jefferson, of course, founded the University of Virginia in part to get at this idea of citizen training.

Since the founding, I think U.S. colleges have across history tried to live up to this ideal from moral education in the 19th century to the rise of scientific reasoning as an anchor for citizenship to the general education programs of the early 20th century. But the truth is that all of these episodes of engagement with this responsibility, with this challenge ultimately ended up in sort of running out of steam and sputtering.

And so, you know, in the face of new priorities or, you know, the challenges from within the internal fabric of the university, the efforts lapsed. And what's been interesting at least, and I talk about within the book, is from the 1980s onward much of the effort for us to think about how we vindicate our role in citizen education has been around the idea of community service.

And we've developed service learning as one of the kind of cornerstones in the way in which we engage this issue of our responsibilities to communities. And there's no doubt that we've been successful and really in viewing a sense of engagement with community and viewing a sense of civic responsibility in terms of doing volunteer work and so forth.

But having said that the fundamentals of citizenship, of understanding the formal mechanisms of government. How governments make decisions and your role as a citizen in those formal institutions. It's clear that we've faltered. We haven't taken that seriously. And as a consequence, it's clear that although our students are great on

voluntarism even their engagement with formal political institutions is much less developed. And I think that leads us vulnerable.

You know, when you read these statistics about student who increasingly graduating students, young Americans who are increasingly indifferent to authoritarian, strong men views of government, as opposed to democracy, you know, that's a wakeup call of saying we can't be indifferent to this and we have to very deliberately education for this responsibility.

So this is where I end up calling for some kind of formal effort at education for the responsibilities of citizenship, which I think is most substantive knowledge as well as skills development.

MS. KAMARCK: And that's what you call in the book, a democracy requirement for graduation?

MR. DANIELS: Yes.

MS. KAMARCK: Which I think is just fascinating. And, you know, I've been at Brookings for nearly 10 years and I thought I was coming to a think tank. And I was going to do, you know, serious political science, et cetera, which I have committed some serious political science.

But along the way, and the whole institution I think found itself in fulfilling a role that it never saw before which is public education. And all of a sudden, you know, we publish a simple -- we started publishing what we call explainers, policy explainers. And we published a simple thing like, you know, a thousand words on why it is so difficult to count undocumented aliens, all right? Just all the methodological things.

We got half a million hits on it, right? And all of these things started going through the roof. And my hypothesis is that one of the reasons is there was such -- that we hit a generation. By the way, our average readership age is about 35. We've hit a

generation who was deprived in high school and in college of basic civic literacy and American history. Because also when we put forth some piece of American history that gets a lot of readers.

And that surprisingly to I think all of us at Brookings, we are now somewhat in the public education business. And I think that's a reflection of the dearth of citizen democracy that you were talking about.

Let me then go on to -- and I love this idea of a democracy requirement. Of course, any political scientist would. Any sort of science in historian.

MR. DANIELS: And, you know, we're having at Hopkins. We've done some easy moves in terms of, you know, first year orientation. The first week, we're exposing kids to issues around the challenges of democracy and the nature of the democratic experiment, but that's right now. It's confined to orientation. And I really am hoping that we're going to be able to build at least an inventory of courses where they can basically choose things of interest in them.

But nevertheless, we know that upon graduation, they have some command of these issues. And so, then hopefully when, you know, you publish your various --

MS. KAMARCK: Explainers.

MR. DANIELS: -- explainers these are updates or reminders for them, but not, you know, first introduction.

MS. KAMARCK: Not the first time.

MR. DANIELS: And again, it's just I think that all of the key institutions in American society that can touch this, we've just got to take this seriously. Particular in terms of the state of peril that we feel both domestically and internationally of the standing of democracy.

MS. KAMARCK: You know, I think my low point here was during the first

impeachment when a young woman, I could tell she was young by her voice, called me up. She was a journalist and she wanted to know about impeachment. And wanted to know, well, is there anything that I can read about it?

I said, well, why don't you start with article two of the constitution. That's a good starting point. And this news, right? This was news so.

All righty. By the way, I'm jumping ahead a little bit to something you talked about in your last chapter. But it seems to me related to this. You mentioned not just the substance but the practice of democracy. And later on in the book, you talk about the dearth of debates on campus. How people have, you know, there's a lot of attention to the fact that some speakers are shooed off campus, et cetera.

But the absence of debate. And debate seems to me to be something or civilized debate, let's say, is something we are sadly lacking in our current democracy. And students aren't exposed to a right winger and a left winger talking about welfare. Or talking about immigration. Or, you know, talking about any of these hot button issues.

Why did that happen? Do the universities just too afraid of debates?

MR. DANIELS: So, you know, it's really interesting how we get to where we have gone to on this issue. And, you know, it starts off as you say. As really thinking about how you are able within the context of the four years that students -- and again, it's 70 percent of Americans are going to some kind of post-secondary education.

So, you know, you think about this moment where you've got increasingly more diverse, more heterogeneous classes. And yet, what is happening is, you know, as to the question of debates. That instead of students going to events where they're confronting other views have seen how your views or people who would articulate your views interact with critics or those who have competing views.

What we're finding is that the students are just going to single speak events.

And so, you know, the problems that we see in America with geographic separation. That the documented evidence that we're living increasingly in homogeneous enclaves where we're sharing, you know, our lives with people who have the same socioeconomic backgrounds or political views as us.

You know, this represents a continuation, albeit on a campus where there's lots of contiguity with others. But we're not encouraging that kind of interaction. And those moments, where you can see debate and see different views and have those challenges. And so, you know, I don't think, you know, in comparison to, let's say, Great Britain where there's just a much stronger tradition of debating societies and so forth that's much more central to the undergraduate experience. I don't think it's as well developed in the United States.

Although, there are clearly there have been moments when these kind of clubs and programs existed on campus. But nevertheless, they have, I think, ended up being supplanted by these other sort of more homogeneous events where it's a single speaker. And so, here, you know, one of the recommendations, it's a very practical recommendation, but it is basically for universities to ensure that there's just a lot of funding and support for student groups and others to basically bring in panels, debates where there's a multiplicity of views.

And so, that again it has a virtue of exposing students to different views on that panel. But it also has a virtue of bringing students from a number of different walks of life together that you're in the same room. Instead of constantly reinforcing your identity as a member of a particular group or enclave.

And then, you know, and just related to that it goes to something outside of the issue of debates. But an issue that I think is very important, it's even encouraging students or insisting that students right from the time they enter university end up being in

rooms with -- sharing rooms and resident facilities with people who are different than they are. And for the last several decades, American universities have essentially allowed students to choose their first-year roommates rather than the university doing it for them.

And surprise, surprise. You know, what students are doing in advance of coming to university is they're finding a lot of students who look just like them. Who share the similar views. So here, it's just this really totally frustrating situation where we've created very diverse campuses in terms of representation. And yet, we have been complicit in allowing students socially and even intellectually to self-segregate and to perpetuate the very kind of micro communities which they're leaving behind.

And so, you know, that's something that again I think we can disrupt. And we have a responsibility to disrupt so that the experience of being in ideally in this very intense pluralistic community for four years where we're living (inaudible) people who are distinctly different from you, but somehow figuring out how you get along just in spite of those differences is really important.

MS. KAMARCK: You know, this was eye opening to me, the emergence of different levels of housing on campus that, in other words, there was expensive housing. Probably with all sorts of cable TV and wonderful stuff. And then there was cheap dormitory housing.

Now, I went to Bryn Mawr many, many, many moons ago, and I was on scholarship. But I had the same dorm room as the girl down the hall. And the only way I knew she was rich was she brought her horse to college. And I thought that was kind of amazing to even have a horse. Let alone bring your horse to college, right?

So but, you know, that I think -- I mean this really hit me in the book. The segregation by class, by ideology on the college campus. And again, going back to this education for democracy is you don't learn to interact with people who are not like you. So

no wonder you can't stand each other.

I taught at Harvard for many years before coming to Brookings. And at one point, I brought Grover Norquist, the head of the taxpayer's union who is very, very ultraconservative guy to speak to my class. Oh, my God. You would have thought I brought Satan himself into class. They were all expecting some -- I was going to bring in some liberal democrat. They wanted me to bring in Hilary Clinton, which I know her, but I couldn't have gotten her there anyway.

And instead, they got Grover Norquist. And, you know, they're so used to being in their bubble that it does hurt democracy. I do think -- I think of all of the things in the book that really hit me as something because that's the informal behavioral side of democracy.

MR. DANIELS: You know, and it turns out, you know, as we think about, you know, this broad problem of, you know, the fragility of democracy, which in truth, you know, my background as, you know is as a lawyer and as a legal academic. And we tend to think, you know, laws, institutions matter.

They change human behavior. They can implicate certain types of behaviors. And, you know, one of the things that particularly in culminating in January 6th is to see the extent to which these are still very fragile arrangements. And norms can undo them. So that we've got to in some sense, if you can't be assured just by virtue of having a constitution or a set of governmental arrangements that they're necessarily going to be self-perpetuating. You've got to support them, embellish them.

And, you know, sometimes the task of how you can actually in all of our roles, how you can make a difference. It seems, well, the phenomena is so overwhelming as to see, you know, the changing views towards democracy and polarization and all the things that we lament often.

But, you know, something like looking at small concrete things you can do. But something like moving to mandatory first year roommate selections instead of letting the students do it that we do it. It turns out that something as simple as that has a profound effect on -- and this has been documented empirically -- but on one's capacity for thinking about how you manage difference. And it has had a significant effect on ideology and political activity through life.

So it's a small perturbation but it turns out to have really significant effects in terms of again just building, you know, ideas of public and civic friendship. So it's just for me, it is just this moment where I think all of us should really be thinking about the big -- but also the very small and concrete ways in which you can make a difference.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. So one final topic I want to get to before we go to audience questions. Is the fact that we've all lamented the demise of facts in public life, right? And Donald Trump introduced us to the term fake news. And now, of course, around the world everybody including Vladimir Putin talks about fake news.

And the internet has really allowed fact and fiction to circulate globally because there are no editors anymore, right? And you take a good hard look at the role of universities as what you call fact cultivating enterprises, which I think is sort of a mouthful but it's also quite accurate.

American universities didn't start out as research organizations however. And that was a surprise to me. When did they become research organizations? And what are they facing now? Because I think this is one of the most important pieces of your work here is really the threads to research and therefore the doubts that have been so about the research agenda or research project?

MR. DANIELS: Well, Elaine, it really goes to what you said a moment ago. Is that we know with proliferation of social media and the, you know, much more rapid

dissemination of fake news rather than accurate news. You know, falsity over truth turns out to have much more velocity on the internet.

And so, we know we're in a world, you know, quite apart from all the balkanization that we talk about in terms of cable news, networks and so forth. And so, you know, it's in that setting that, you know, you've got to look at the institutions that ultimately are in charge with being scrupulously objective. Really committed to the idea that there are such a thing as facts, as truths.

And that one can look to those institutions as places where claims can be tested. And whether there being made in social media or whether they're being made by elected officials or business leaders that there's a test of whether or not these are true claims or not. And obviously, one does not want to see actions, interventions being made on foundations that are false and lack substance.

So that's an important role for universities. It's not just universities, of course. I think media and I think institutions like yours play a really important role in that enterprise as well. But as you said, it wasn't a role that came naturally to us or very quickly to us. Because originally, American universities were just teaching colleges.

And the addition of research in the sense that we had certain activities that we would undertake and pursue to truth and to unearth new knowledge and preserve knowledge came later on.

And here, it's a little self-indulgent, but you asked the question. This is a story for the role that John Hopkins played as really the first university in the United States that took the German model of universities and grafted it into American soil.

But with John Hopkins essentially taking on a research function focusing on graduate education, really building a number of rigorous scholarly communities in the humanities and the sciences and so forth. That really has ultimately changed the character

of universities in the United States and really given us this role as creators and stewards of fact.

Having said that the thing that I am concerned about in the book is that given how important it is that you have a neutral arbiter, a place that people can go to and trust the truth claims that are being made by those institutions. One of the things that I think is really distressing is that in terms of our own published research that we are increasingly having problems in terms of reproducing the findings of research studies in the social sciences as well as in the hard sciences.

And so, you know, there's a variety of reasons that I think contribute to that that I discuss in the book. But the essential point is that if we falter in our ability to be able to demonstrate that our claims to fact are true, and that we have robust results that are generated by the work of our faculty. If there's a sense that we as an institution are vulnerable or susceptible to the charge that our studies are not reproducible, are not accurate then I think we really undercut our standing in society.

And that's really a problem in terms of again if we are seen to be tainted in the way that media is increasingly seen on those terms. And think tanks are seen in those terms. Well, who is ultimately going to play the checking role on people of power? And, you know, again in a moment where we see the hostility that authoritarian leaders have to universities.

You know, we're already targeted because we do this role well. But if we don't do it well, we just play into their crusade. And, you know, just this few weeks ago, it was so distressing to see a letter on March 4th written by the Russian university rectors in full throated support of Putin and the military. And this again, if we go in this direction who is left to really call up falsity?

MS. KAMARCK: In your book, you delineate this problem. And then you

talk about something called the open science movement, which struck me as a real paradigm change from traditional peer review. Which those of us who academics have grown up with. And is somewhat frustrating mostly because it is endless.

And in the social sciences, it keeps you from being a -- you might become an intellectual, but you're not a public intellectual because the world goes by while you're still being peer reviewed or published. Can you tell us a little bit about the concept of open science?

MR. DANIELS: Well, this is a movement that has been underway for several years now. But essentially the idea is that when you publish, you as a faculty member, publish your work. And you can publish it quickly. Anyone can put anything out in the internet, of course.

But the idea is if you publish and you particularly are dealing with databases where your findings or conclusions are based on the data that you have collected. If you are willing to not just simply show the conclusions that you derive from the data, but actually put in the datasets out there so that others can test and ascertain whether or not what you've said is accurate.

You know, that's a way in which to your point, you could expedite the time to dissemination of findings. But you also can provide a credible assurance to the community that your data is there and you have the competence that if people start to probe it, that they're not going to find that there's a disjunction between the conclusions you've drawn and the data you have utilized.

And, you know, this is more generally part of, I think a spirit of accountability that you see in other institutions like media, for instance. The number of good media outlets now that are having their journalists and reporters putting more of the primary work that they have done in development of their articles online. And so, it's open to public scrutiny. I think

this is a way again in which we can bond our commitment to accuracy.

And then finally, it's just essentially a movement as you indicated in the question you asked. Where people can get things out quickly and put it out to broad public evaluation and not have the findings sequestered behind paywalls and so forth that mean only certain folks are going to get access to it if they pay the fees that are required to get access to those databases.

And again, the hope is that the crowd of experts -- much in the way that you see in something Wikipedia are going to be able to consistently provide accurate assessments of what those studies look like when they're evaluated against these standards are peers.

MS. KAMARCK: And I think it's a fascinating movement. And I think for anybody interested in this, the book does a really good job of sort of explaining this alternative. That's a paradigm shift. That is really a big one.

Well, look, let's -- we have a couple of minutes left so let's go to a couple of questions that have come in. We have someone at the State Department, Kerry, asking, how different a role do universities play overseas in promoting democracy? Is there a different model out there?

MR. DANIELS: You know, although I write this book primarily in the context of the United States because it's Canada and the United States or the countries that I know best and understand well the fabric of these institutions.

I think the role of universities in democracy is universal. And again, you know, as one looks at there is ways in which universities can hold power to account. The ways that they train citizens for democracy. How they again give opportunities for social mobility and really allow the promise of equal opportunity to be realized.

I truly think this is universal. And I think these institutions have universal

import. And again, as I referred to a few moments ago. It's not surprising that when you look at from, you know, Mussolini to Communist Poland to Hungary, Turkey and Russia, you know, today. You see the extent to which autocratic leaders hate universities. And often, they're the first institutions that are targeted for special treatment when they are able to consolidate power.

Again, I think that reflects the power of these institutions in really bolstering the fabric of democracy. So I think the truths are here and around the value and the role of universities are truly universal.

MS. KAMARCK: Let's see. We have a question, no name attached. Basically, if democracy is in peril and fragile. How has it gotten to this point? Who is currently leading? How did they choose their first-year roommates, okay? I kind of getting it down to the nub. But who is doing a good job of this?

MR. DANIELS: In terms of institutions that are -- universities that are --

MS. KAMARCK: I think what the question means is universities who are doing a job at --

MR. DANIELS: Look, I think what you find is there's lots of great examples. This is the magic of an incredibly dynamic system of higher education in the United States. We have public and private universities, small liberal arts colleges. Ones that are more technically inclined. I mean it is such an adversity of different institutions.

And a lot of institutions are taking on pieces of the puzzle. So for instance, on the democracy requirement institutions like Purdue had been really interesting in terms of insisting on a graduation requirement that requires students can show on graduation that they've mastered some rudimentary set of understandings around the nature of democracy.

Stanford has recently revised its first-year curriculum to provide a more formalized and consistent exposure to democratic principles. One can think about the

institutions that have been really active in thinking about ways in which you can promote social mobility.

There's a wonderful group that Dan Fortified from Aspen has been leading called the American Talent Initiative in which more than 100 different universities that are distinguished by the fact they have very high completion rates. So their students have all banded together to try and increase the number of students who are from Pell eligible backgrounds who are coming to universities, et cetera.

So there's lots of experimentation and commitment on a number of these different fronts. The question is have we moved to a point though where it's consistent, universal and embodied in every institution in the way that is necessary if we're going to take this moment, this challenge seriously? And that sadly, the answer is not yet.

MS. KAMARCK: Another sort of related question from Sarah Cia (phonetic) of Ross at USAID. And she or he, forgive me for not knowing what the first name is. Asks how do we promote democracy and civic education with youth in such a sensitive and restricting political environment?

I mean we're in a touchy period of time. And I agree with the question. I like the notion of a democracy requirement, but as soon as you begin to operationalize it, you can see the arguments coming right up out the political environment.

MR. DANIELS: You know, look at our own country and abroad. There's any number of reasons for people to object to this agenda. You know, it reminds me when years ago, I was doing a lot of writing and thinking as a law professor around the role of rule of law in the developing the world.

And there's a very robust literature as you know that shows countries that have high rule of law score surprise, surprise have better economic performance, better civil liberties, so on and so forth. And so, we know what a good rule of law looks like. And it's

again one could say, well, let's just, you know, we've just got to get more of that in these countries.

And, you know, whether in our own country or internationally just build a stronger rule of law and everything is solved. And, you know, when you look at the nature of the rule of law is really to limit the exercise of arbitrary power.

There's no question that there are people who are really hostile to that idea. And even though this has a noble lineage and a really compelling foundation, there's just going to be people in power who will resist it. And so, I think so to hear that we know that this commitment to liberal democracy means constraints on the exercise of power. It means, you know, having to support an idea of citizenship which is at the very core. About freedom and equality.

And we know in a lot of countries that's a provocative idea. So I think when asked to be realistic that whether we're talking in our own country or elsewhere that there are going to be groups and interest that are going to see this as threatening to their interest. And, you know, there I think it requires some persistence of and some ingenuity at figure out ways in which we enlist people to support the cause.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. We have a comment from somebody in the audience suggesting that we look at *History Disrupted* by Jason Steinhauer, a very good read applicable to universities and their challenges.

Final question, and then I want Ron to sort of summarize his platform. The final question is what are the incentives for universities and colleges to move in the direction of educating citizens?

MR. DANIELS: So I think ultimately it's a great question. I think the incentive, I think is, you know, after all we're institutions that are not about profit. We're institutions that are motivated by a sense of how we vindicate the public good and how we

do better for society.

And I think the incentive is simply to be part of a solution to our current democratic moment in the sense of the fragility of our democratic institutions where we can say, we were part of the coalition that basically, you know, decided to understand this moment and to act in a way that was commensurate with its severity.

And I think people on the campus and I think the folks who graduates of our institutions, I'm hoping will see that there are real bragging rights in being part of that enterprise and taking this moment seriously. And instead of just treating this as something that we analyze and that we're worried about the perilous state of democracy both domestically and abroad, but saying, you know, we actually -- we rolled up our sleeves.

And, you know, we did some of these things that were hard for these institutions to do, but nevertheless, we recognized the moment and we were part of a solution. And I think there's a lot of psychic and social reward that comes from that.

MS. KAMARCK: Good. So, Ron, in the last couple minutes tell us very succinctly your platform. I mean what would you do? You brought up some of these. What would you do to help, to enlist or to have universities helping in the democratic project?

MR. DANIELS: So just very succinctly and thanks for the opportunity. It's first and foremost taking the idea that universities have an indispensable role to play in democracy and that there's an obligation that comes along with that perspective role.

It's working harder at social mobility and increasing our access. Whether changing programs like legacy or advocating for increases to financial aid investment by the federal government in the form of the Pell loans.

It's doing the hard work at developing new experiments around a democratic education requirement that we would do at the university level that would supplement what we hope is happening at the K-12 level, but not consistently. It's taking our

role as stewards of fact seriously.

Getting at the issues around the non-reproducibility of our research and setting up structures and mechanisms to ensure that our claims are easily substantiated. And that our work is widely disseminated again in a way that safeguards our truth finding role.

And then finally, being really cognizant of the fact that as much as we should feel good about the more diverse communities that we have created on our campuses that if we don't really get true interaction, engagement across all the different communities that are represented on our campuses, we are really failing to properly model the promise of pluralism and to create a new generation of citizens who are not hostile to difference, but know how to manage it and to thrive in it. There it is. The K-tel version of the book.

MS. KAMARCK: And I had actually written those things down. So it comes out very clearly.

This is a book everyone must read as particularly I think we've got a very strong audience of educators here if I looked at responses. And I want to Ron for coming to join us at Brookings. And everybody have a very nice day. Bye-bye.

MR. DANIELS: Thanks, Elaine.

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