

tioners, faculty members, graduate students (especially writers of doctoral dissertations), and academic administrators, among others. For researchers of college impact, this volume must be on a close at hand bookshelf.

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*Power and Politics in University Governance:  
Organization and Change at the Universidad Nacional  
Autónoma de México* by Imanol Ordorika. New York:  
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The *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM) is known throughout Mexico as *la máxima casa de estudios* (the nation's university), primarily because of the preeminent role that it plays in supporting the country's scientific and cultural systems. With an enrollment of more than 250,000 students, UNAM is the largest and most important university in the country; indeed, estimates suggest that UNAM accounts for as much as 50 percent of the nation's university research. Further evidence of the importance of UNAM is the fact that the university houses the National Library and the National Botanical Garden, runs the country's seismological system, and manages institutions comparable in scope to the Smithsonian and the National Observatory in the United States. Because of the prominent role that UNAM plays within the broader society, governance and control of the university has been a source of intense conflict over the years, and at times has led to numerous student strikes and closings of the university's main campus in Mexico City. Given the cultural and political significance of UNAM, a recent work by Imanol Ordorika warrants serious attention.

In his book, *Power and Politics in University Governance: Organization and*

*Change at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, Ordorika takes a critical look at the last 100 years of Mexican political history and its intersection with governance and politics at UNAM. Ordorika constructs a political theory of conflict within higher education by integrating theories of the state, education, and politics. His goal is to develop a “conceptual frame [that] builds a bridge between the university and its societal context” (p. 6). Accordingly, he draws upon numerous critical, neo-Marxist, and conflict theorists, including Antonio Gramsci, Nicos Poulantzas, and C. Wright Mills and presents a “hegemonic model of politics and governance in higher education” (p. 31).

To more fully comprehend the complexity of the state’s relationship to UNAM, Ordorika begins by looking at the historical development of Mexico and the role of authoritarianism after the Revolution of 1910. He identifies three critical periods in Mexican history that serve as defining points in the development of UNAM: emergence (1917–1944), consolidation (1944–1968), and crisis (1968 to present). Emergence is described as a period following the Revolution in which “the revolutionary elite” sought to situate power and control within central authorities, while limiting the power and influence of democratic electoral processes. Consolidation follows the creation of the *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM) in which the contest for power was successfully limited to a small inner circle affiliated with the PRM and known as the “revolutionary family.” The third period describes major challenges to Mexican authoritarianism, beginning with the student movement of 1968. As Ordorika notes, “The [student] movement itself and the violent response by the government initiated a long crisis of the political system. The phase of crisis has evolved in the midst of vast social and political conflicts up to this day” (p. 40). A contemporary example of the crisis of authoritarianism is the July 2000 election in which the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), formerly the PRM, lost the presidential election to Vicente Fox and the *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN).

In relating these broad national periods to UNAM, Ordorika notes several key developments. First, UNAM was officially founded within the context of the emergence of authoritarianism following the Revolution, and thus the university’s early years were framed by direct subordination to the federal government. However, federal authoritarianism often was met by subaltern forces and movements, as students sought to advance more democratic policies and practices. Thus, a second key development in the historic trajectory of UNAM was the 1929 student movement, which opposed new evaluation procedures and sought student participation in the University Council. Ultimately, Mexican President Emilio Portes Gil responded to the students’ demands by granting autonomy to the university.

In time, though, the influence of the 1929 student movement would be challenged by a consolidation of power led by Professor Antonio Caso and a group of seven *universitarios* (professors) known as the *Siete Sabios* (seven wise men), who argued for academic freedom over a socialist vision grounded in dialectic materialism. For Ordorika, the conflict at UNAM synthesized two oppositional views concerning the social role of universities: “It represented a struggle between those that demanded social commitment for the solution of practical problems of development versus those for whom the University was only responsible for the pursuit of knowledge in an abstract sense” (p. 53).

The idea of a socially engaged university met stiff resistance throughout the

1940s and 1950s, as efforts to “de-politicize” UNAM were waged under the banner of a “technical reorganization,” favoring a positivist view of knowledge. The presumption was that the University should be committed to “creating and transmitting knowledge” (p. 64), and should not be engaged in the nation’s politics. Of course, such a position only served to consolidate the power of those in office. As Ordorika explains, “The final product, the new political organization of the University, was satisfactory for both internal and external dominant political actors. The new political arrangement symbolized the pact between the Mexican State and urban intellectuals. They had been awarded a political space with relative autonomy in exchange for loyalty and responsiveness” (p. 69).

The student movement of 1968 posed a serious challenge to *presidencialismo* (power vested almost entirely with the executive office) and marked the beginning of the crisis of authoritarianism. Initially, the movement was a response to police brutality and the occupation of one of UNAM’s preparatory schools. Early protests included the participation of UNAM’s Rector, Javier Barros Sierra, which served to discredit governmental claims of a communist conspiracy. In time, the movement came to symbolize the larger struggle for civil and political liberties and the democratization of Mexican society. A pivotal event in the movement and in the political history of Mexico occurred on October 2, 1968, when the Mexican army, the police, and paramilitary units fired on participants at a demonstration of the *Consejo Nacional de Huelga* (National Strike Council) in Tlatelolco (in Mexico City). Estimates of the deaths range from 100 to more than 300, and the effect upon the consciousness of Mexican citizens would be long-lasting. Ordorika contends that the violent reaction by Mexican authorities led to a crisis of legitimacy and marked the beginning of a steady decline of authoritarianism and *presidencialismo*. Although attempts to advance a conservative restoration throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, primarily under the leadership of Rector Guillermo Soberón, met with much success, the seeds of democratic resistance already were sown. Consequently, UNAM became a site for the democratic impulse of the broader society, with progressive student movements re-emerging from time to time throughout the 1980s and 1990s, culminating with the student strike of 1999 and efforts by students to resist tuition increases and forge a more inclusive governing structure. Consequently, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century UNAM had come full circle: From its historical role of reacting to state politics, UNAM had become a major political and cultural force in shaping the Mexican nation-state.

An interesting facet to Ordorika’s work concerns his location within the landscape of UNAM. As a student in the 1980s, he was one of the leaders of the *Consejo Estudiantil Universitario* (along with Carlos Ímaz and Antonio Santos), which helped to direct the 1986 student movement to challenge repressive police and military violence and to resist tuition increases and the implementation of restrictive entrance examinations. Ordorika acknowledges the importance of his history as a student activist at UNAM: “I have been marked forever by my early memories of the student movement of 1968, by the years of despair and hopelessness of many defeats, and by the marvelous experience of the *Consejo Estudiantil Universitario* from 1986 to 1990” (p. ix). Presently, Ordorika is a professor with the *Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas* at UNAM and centers his work on the political economy of higher education. Both his past and present experience at UNAM, as well as his progressive politics, play a

major role in shaping his research and writing: "Since the very beginning of this research I have been much more than a participant observer. My long experience as an activist and my own position as a researcher have committed me to radical reform in Mexico's National Autonomous University. Inevitably, my own biases tint this research through the selection of the topic, the theory, and the methodology" (p.15). Ordorika's confession is refreshing, especially given the prevailing norms of social science in which rigor often is equated with "objective" and "apolitical" analysis.

A clear strength of Ordorika's work is the broad scope he brings to his explanation and analysis of power and politics in university life. *Power and Politics in University Governance* is not simply a history of UNAM over the past 100 years; it is a history of Mexico and the struggle for democracy. National politics in Mexico are embedded in the national university, and consequently, claims of institutional autonomy must be understood in light of inevitable interventions by governmental leaders seeking to advance their own political and ideological interests. But such politicization is not unique to UNAM, and this is the broad appeal of Ordorika's work for scholars of higher education: Universities, especially those that are publicly funded, always exist within the political sphere, and knowledge is rarely socially neutral. Consequently, should we be surprised that power and politics are the strange bedfellows of public higher education? To the contrary, we should be suspicious when claims about bureaucratic rationality are advanced as a vehicle for de-politicization, because inevitably such processes favor those who hold power and restrict the role of the university as an agent of social change. This is the most significant contribution of Ordorika's political and intellectual endeavor, and a major contribution at that.

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*What the Best College Teachers Do* by Ken Bain.  
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004. 224p.

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There are two things that make a book about college teaching successful. The first is to understand one's audience and then to write in a way that is appealing to that audience; the second is that the work must be based on recognized, substantial research. Without an understanding of the readers by the author, the work will miss its mark and not be carefully read or accepted. Without the substance, the work will be yet another personal perspective, possibly uninformed of the depth and breadth of what we do know about college teaching, and perhaps offering opinions that are inaccurate or advice that is inappropriate for many readers. This book speaks to the higher education community in general, and to college teachers in particular, and college teachers are after all, a lot trained in critical thinking, experienced in their practice, and self-assured in their views on their art and craft. They will not lightly suffer heavy-handed pedantry, irrelevancies, or sloppy scholarship.

Ken Bain is well aware of these two caveats, and his book, *What the Best*