

Negotiating Roles Under Fire: Faculty–Student Perspectives on the Evolving Mission of the University

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Abstract:

This study explores how crises reshape academic roles by examining perceptions of 259 faculty members and 80 students regarding the university's mission during wartime. Whereas existing scholarship has largely prioritized policy and leadership perspectives, this research foregrounds the lived experiences of those who enact academic work daily. Integrating qualitative insights from both groups, the study conceptualizes academic roles in crisis as fluid spaces of continuity and transformation.

Findings reveal that approximately one-third of faculty members uphold traditional academic functions—knowledge transmission and professional training—as stabilizing anchors amidst upheaval. Yet, this perceived continuity is interwoven with intensified emotional labor and adaptive pedagogy, reflecting a shift toward relational, human-centered education. Faculty narratives illustrate a recalibration of teaching practices to support student well-being and resilience under duress.

Students, meanwhile, express a strong preference for depoliticized, safe, and cohesive learning environments. Their emphasis on neutrality and belonging underscores a dialectical tension between civic engagement and psychological security. Together, these perspectives illuminate the hybrid nature of academic work in times of conflict—simultaneously cognitive, emotional, and civic.

By linking these insights to broader socio-technological transformations, the study positions universities as essential agents of resilience and adaptability. It argues that emotional support and pedagogical flexibility are not temporary responses but integral components of higher education's evolving mission in a volatile world.