

AI Generated Summary of Kerr's The Uses of the University

The document is a historical and sociological examination of the evolution of universities, particularly focusing on the development of the modern American university. It begins by contrasting the classical ideal of a university, as a unified community dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, with the reality of the contemporary university, which the author terms the "multiversity." This multiversity is characterized by its diverse and often conflicting functions, serving as a center for undergraduate and graduate education, research, professional training, and public service. The author traces the historical roots of the multiversity, highlighting the influences of the German research university and the American land-grant college.

The document then delves into the governance of the multiversity, analyzing the distribution of power among various stakeholders, including students, faculty, administration, and external bodies such as governing boards and funding agencies. The author argues that the multiversity president, unlike the heroic figures of the past, primarily functions as a mediator, balancing the competing interests and demands of these different groups. The document also discusses the changing nature of life within the multiversity for both students and faculty, noting the increased emphasis on research, the rise of consulting and administrative roles for faculty, and the fragmentation of the intellectual community.

Finally, the document explores the justification for the multiversity, arguing that its diverse and often contradictory functions ultimately contribute to its effectiveness in serving the needs of an advancing civilization. The author concludes by highlighting the adaptability of the multiversity, particularly its response to the influx of federal funding following World War II, and suggests that while the multiversity may lack a single unifying purpose, it remains a vital institution for the preservation, creation, and dissemination of knowledge.

Detailed Summary of the Document

Major Point 1: The Transformation of the University into the Multiversity

- * The modern American university, or multiversity, is a complex institution with diverse and often conflicting functions.
- * It serves as a center for undergraduate and graduate education, research, professional training, and public service.
- * This contrasts with the classical ideal of a university as a unified community dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

- * The multiversity is a product of historical forces, including the rise of the German research university and the American land-grant college

Major Point 2: Governance of the Multiversity

- * Power in the multiversity is distributed among various stakeholders, including students, faculty, administration, and external bodies.
- * The multiversity president functions primarily as a mediator, balancing these competing interests and demands.
- * This contrasts with the historical image of the university president as a heroic leader.
- * The multiversity is characterized by a "kind of lawlessness" due to its many separate sources of initiative and power

Major Point 3: Life in the Multiversity

- * The multiversity is a "city of infinite variety" with a vast range of choices for both students and faculty.
- * Students are more diverse and vocationally oriented than in the past.
- * Faculty are increasingly involved in research, consulting, and administration, with teaching becoming less central.
- * The intellectual community is fragmented, with fewer common topics of conversation.

Major Point 4: Justification of the Multiversity

- * The multiversity is justified by its historical development, its consistency with the surrounding society, and its effectiveness in serving the needs of an advancing civilization.
- * It excels in the preservation, creation, and dissemination of knowledge.
- * It is adaptable and responsive to new opportunities, as demonstrated by its response to federal funding following World War II.