

Moral Dilemmas and the Future of Business Research

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William H. Glick

H. Joe Nelson Professor of Management, Rice University
Past Board Chair, AACSB International



Parts of the Problem

“...increasing numbers of organizational scholars have begun to express concern that organizational/administrative science has had little effect on life in organizations...”

J.M. Beyer (1982): “Introduction to the special issue on the utilization of organizational research,” ASQ, pp. 588-590.

Parts of the Problem

“...our failure to present ourselves—our body of knowledge and our perspective—to the world of affairs...[is the result] of an incestuous, closed loop of scholarship...”

D. Hambrick (1994): “What if the Academy actually mattered?” Presidential Address published in AMR, pp. 11-16.

Parts of the Problem

“... Research articles often give inaccurate information about how researchers developed hypotheses, analyzed data, and drew conclusions. Published articles sometimes report only some hypotheses that researchers tested, or some statistical analyses that researchers made...”

A. Schwab & W.H. Starbuck (2017): Bennis & J. O’Toole (2005): “A call for openness in research reporting: How to turn covert practices into helpful tools,” *AMLE*, 16, 1-17.

Persistent Systemic Institutionalized Problems

Entrenched and inter-twined norms, practices and incentive structures at all levels of the business school research eco-system

B-school reputation based on faculty publications in journals defined as prestigious based on self-referential criteria

Within academics, rewards are clear and self-sustaining, but benefits to the public are not so clear

Pressure to conform – rankings and assessments - hard to change by any one group or any one school – or even one country

Closed-Loop System



- “External isomorphic pressures and internal path-dependent processes have created **self-reinforcing feedback loops**. Inputs from broader society – and **the “paying public”** – are shut out of this closed-loop system. As several senior business academics have echoed, this is a self-centred, self-serving, self-feeding process, a form of academic narcissism that parallels the salons of Marie Antoinette.”

- *McKiernan, P. and Glick, W.H. 2017. Why care about impact? EFMD Global Focus, 11 (1), 18-21.*

Cost of Research?

- Estimated cost of an A-journal article: \$400,000
 - Initial estimate from Terweisch & Ulrich (2014)
 - Multiplied by count of articles in 4 and 4* journals
 - Global annual expenditure on business research: ???

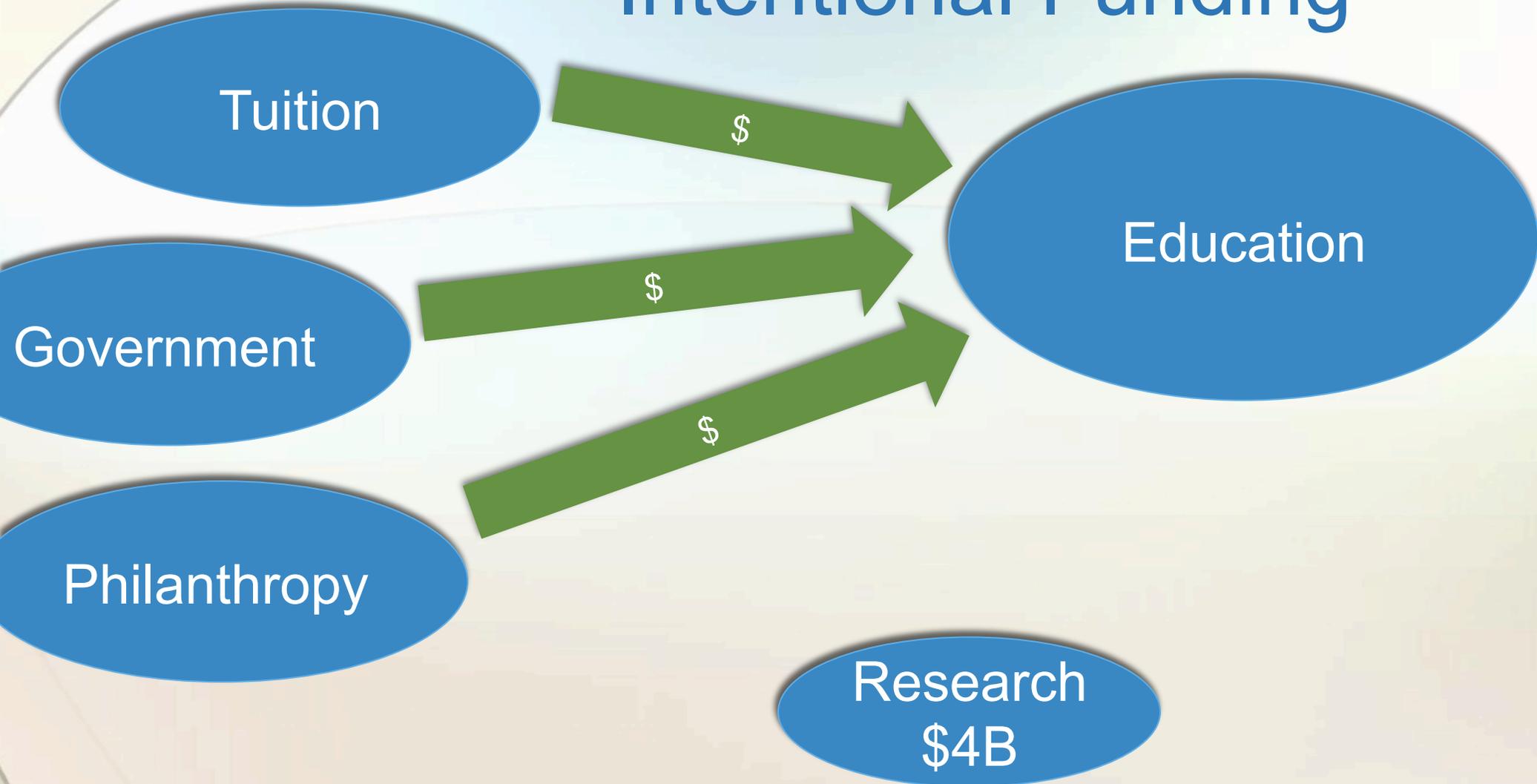
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 - Global annual expenditure on business research: **\$4+B**
- AACSB global salary survey
 - Average salaries for 30,039 research faculty
 - Assuming 40% faculty time spent on research
 - Extrapolating from 511 reporting schools to the 780 accredited schools, global annual expenditure: **???**

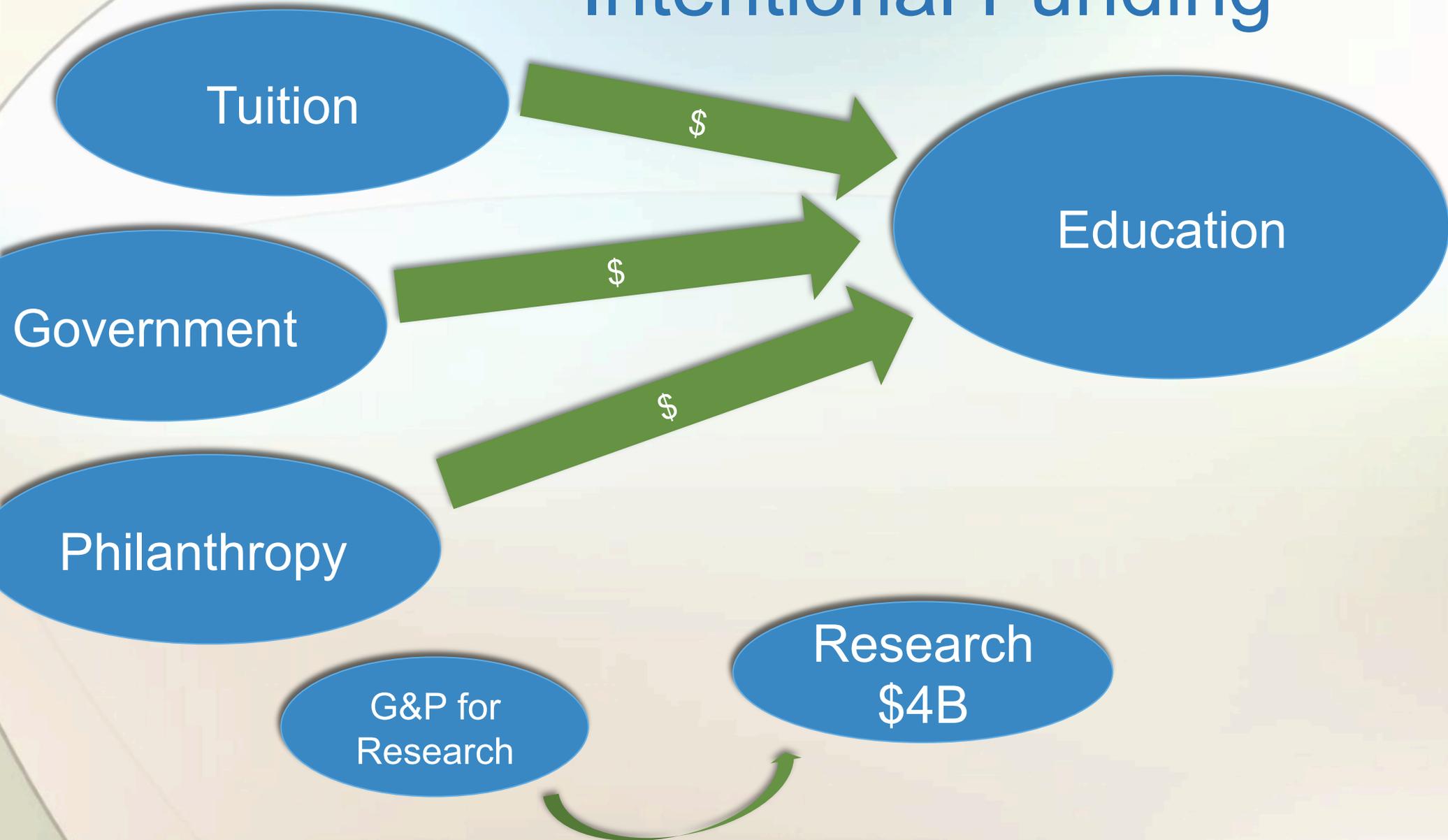
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 - Average salaries for 30,039 research faculty
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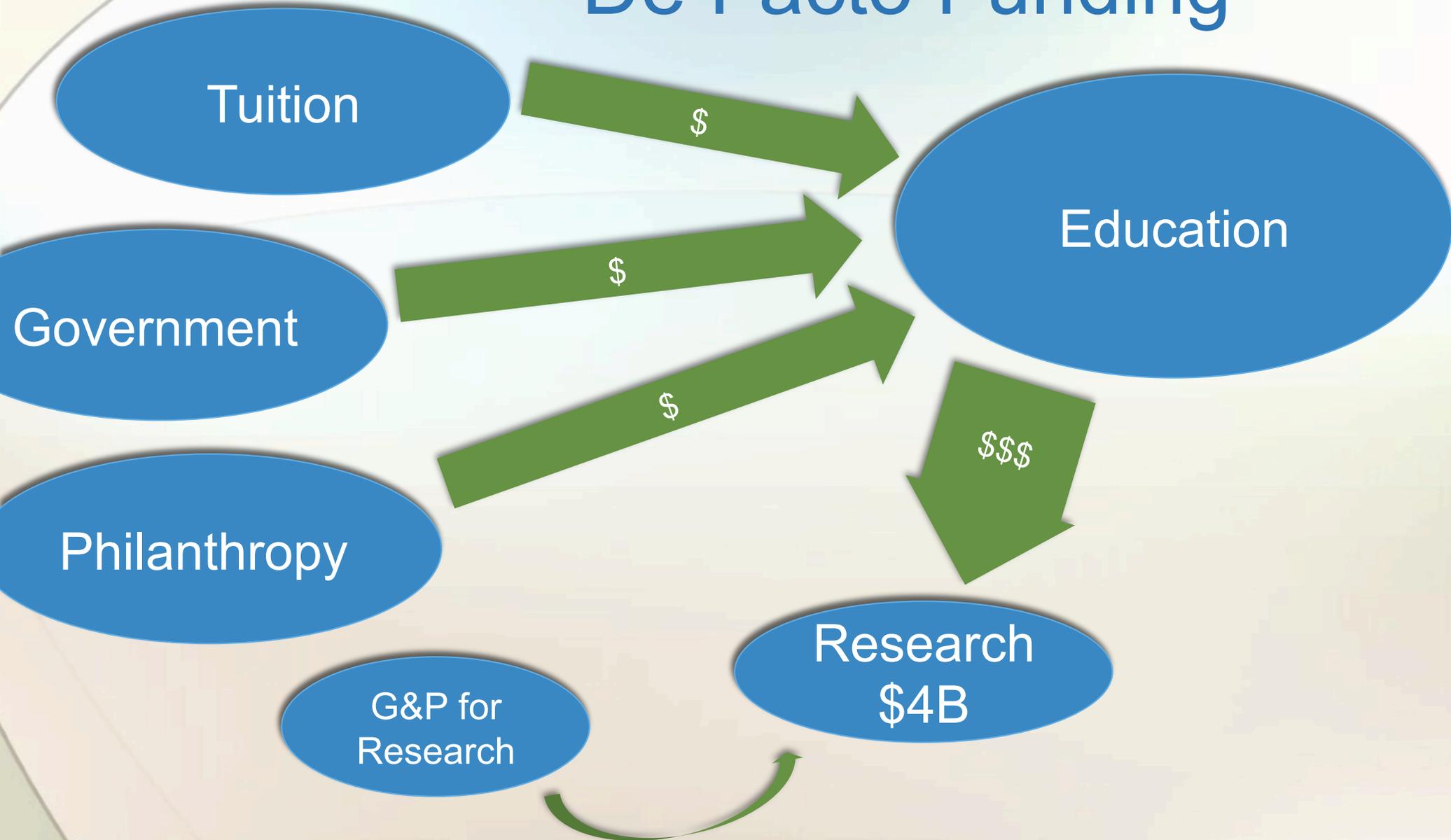
Intentional Funding



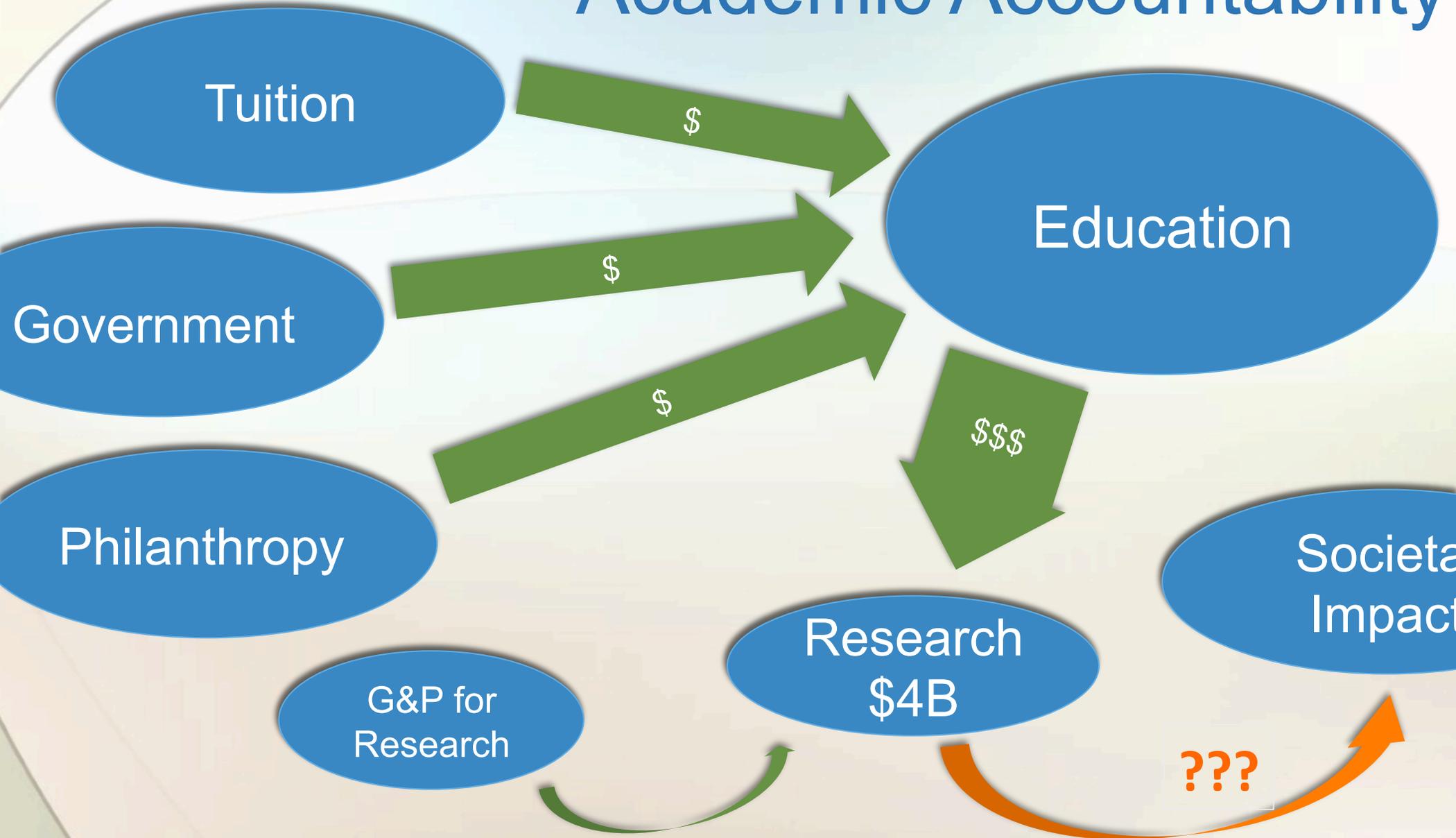
Intentional Funding



De Facto Funding



Academic Accountability



Two Crises in Current Business Research

The Crisis of Relevance (Usefulness)

- Topics of research distant from practice or the current challenges in business and society.
- Publication number and not societal impact as the primary measure of scholarly success.

The Crisis of Integrity (Credibility)

- Rigorous but unreliable and non-reproducible results.
- Questionable research practices, threatening research integrity

Two Forms of Responsibility

Science

Reliable and repeatable discoveries and findings

Credibility dimension of responsible research

Society

Knowledge that will contribute to the development of better business and a better world

Usefulness dimension of responsible research



What if **we** – or another group of Schools opt to “Do Nothing”?

falling behind on the educational mission

no revenue tied directly to research mission when estimated cost of research is \$4B

Disruptors challenge legitimacy & survival of business schools

What to do?

Community for Responsible Research in Business and Management

senior scholars, 8 deans and 3 institutional support

business disciplines, 23 universities, 10 countries

Collectively, they are:

- Intellectual leaders of their fields
- Lead journal editors and association leaders
- Disciplinarily and regionally diversified

Two Core Issues

Results - Credible, reliable, trustworthy

- Rigorous but not reliable – non-reproducible results
- Questionable research practices – threat to integrity

Knowledge - relevant and useful for practice

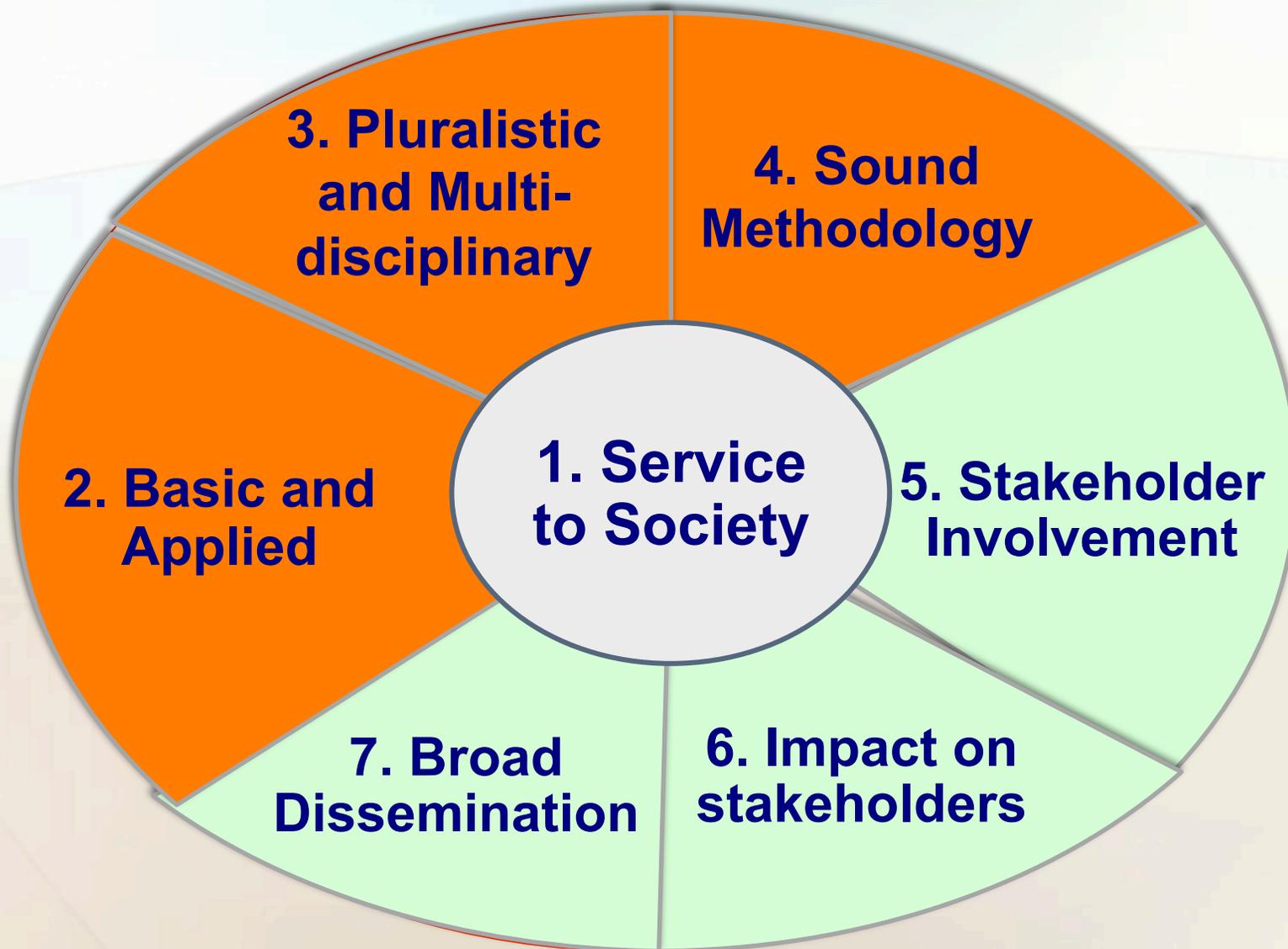
- Topics of research very distant from practices or challenges in business and society
- Publication numbers and citation counts as primary measures of success

Without ... credible research findings, the question of relevance is irrelevant”

Vision 2030

2030, business and management schools worldwide are ...
produc[ing] well-grounded knowledge on pressing problems. Both
schools and scholars are committed to the ***principles of responsi***
search... Research has helped ... to develop effective systems
leading to high economic performance, great innovations, positive
employee and customer wellbeing, a clean environment, and strong
communities. Many schools have contributed valuable knowledge to
support humanity's highest aspirations, e.g., poverty alleviation,
access to food, clean water, and education; a green environment,
gender and social equality; economic growth and fair wealth
distribution..."

Seven Principles of Responsible Research



Support the Movement, Add Your Voice

Visit the RRBM website

<http://rrbm.network>

Endorse the position paper

Join the RRBM community

Spread the word about RRBM

**Contribute a blog to share your
personal actions to promote RRBM**



Call to Action

“Responsible research for
better business and a better
world.”

Thank you!

