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Nannerl O. Keohane is one of the most widely respected leaders in higher education. A political theorist who served as President of Wellesley College and Duke University, she has firsthand knowledge of the challenges facing modern universities: rising costs, the temptations of "corporatization," consumerist students, nomadic faculty members, and a bewildering wave of new technologies. Her views on these issues and on the role and future of higher education are captured in Higher Ground, a collection of speeches and essays that she wrote over a twenty-year period.

Keohane regards colleges and universities as intergenerational partnerships in learning and discovery, whose compelling purposes include not only teaching and research but also service to society. Their mission is to equip students with a moral education, not simply preparation for a career or professional school.