Preface

In this edited volume we are concerned with ‘Globalization, universities and issues of sustainable human development.’ Over the past few years, we (and many of our colleagues) have been engaged in three somewhat separate endeavors in our teaching, research and outreach. First, we have been examining the impact of globalization and the changes in the international institutional structure on different types of countries (industrialized, transitional, developing), organizations (firms, community-based organizations, or universities themselves), and groups of people (including women, immigrants and refugees, both high tech and production workers, and the poor). Second, we have put considerable energy into conceptualizing and operationalizing the role of the university in promoting sustainable regional development. Third, we have thought more broadly about what ‘sustainable human development’ really is (beyond its traditional environmental meaning). Efforts of our larger group in thinking more expansively about the components of human-centered and sustainable development include the founding of a graduate department, the Department of Regional Economic and Social Development (RESD) at UMass Lowell, to approach this from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary points of view and the publication of Approaches to Sustainable Development: The Public University in the Regional Economy, edited by the two of us along with William Lazonick and Charles Levenstein (2001).

We build on our earlier work in this volume and move to a different level of analysis that brings these three bodies of knowledge together. In addition to considering the role of the university in regional development, we believe it is time to ask a new and bigger question that has not been voiced enough elsewhere: Given the fast-changing global economy and the challenges it presents for many countries and groups of people, what is the role for the university as an institution internationally in promoting sustainable human development?

The chapters herein begin to answer this question. Part I addresses ‘Globalization and the challenges confronting the university.’ The first chapter provides an overview of the issues: outlining the changes associated with the recent wave of globalization (including changes in the relative power of institutions globally), suggesting a role internationally for the university as an institution promoting sustainable human development, and
examining the constraints universities face in industrialized and developing countries in pursuing this objective. The next three chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) look at the effects of the increased market focus of the world economy on several nations: Jamaica, a low-income, developing nation; Slovenia, a transitional economy; and the Republic of Ireland, a country on the periphery of the industrialized nations. The last two chapters in this section (Chapters 5 and 6) turn to an investigation of the particular effects of various processes of globalization (such as economic liberalization and democratization) on women, a group of people who are typically disadvantaged in most societies. Collectively, the chapters in Part I point out the need for the university to take a role in meeting the challenges of globalization. They begin to suggest ways universities can be a force for change that improves the lives of people worldwide who are particularly hurt by the processes of globalization.

In Part II, ‘Answering the challenge: the university, knowledge creation and the sustainable human development process,’ Chapters 7 to 12 discuss efforts undertaken by universities to concretely address the issues of promoting sustainable human development in the fast-changing global economy. They provide an overview of some initiatives in Malaysia and India and discuss several promising endeavors at our institution that are generalizable to other university settings. Collectively these chapters explore the role that universities can play locally, nationally and globally as a force fostering development beneficial to communities and nations.

In the brief concluding chapter we outline the main themes that occur throughout the volume and the overall collective view of the authors on what is needed for the university to begin to assume this role successfully. We suggest work for the future. There remains a need for much more analysis regarding which types of university collaborations with other institutions are effective in fostering economically and socially vibrant regions over the longer term. It is our hope that the discussion in this volume will lead to a reassessment elsewhere of how universities can have a transformative and sustaining impact for humane development and can move us toward a more sustainable and people-centered development process.

Since this volume is an outgrowth of ten years of work at our institution, we are indebted to many. First, if the administration of UMass Lowell had not taken the initiative to focus its mission on promotion of sustainable regional development, most of this work could not have been done. Chancellor William T. Hogan and the administration provided important support for key committees to bring this mission to life. One of these, the Committee on Industrial Theory and Assessment (CITA), has provided encouragement (including financial support) for cross-disciplinary research and has conducted conferences on sustainable development annu-
ally since 1997. Another, the Committee of Federated Centers and Institutes (CFCI) has provided support for the outreach of centers that work collaboratively, building on multidisciplinary approaches to regional problems. We thank all our colleagues in CITA, including Nancy Hodge the administrative assistant. We are grateful to our students in the Development Economics classes of Spring 2001 for helping us think through some of our ideas on globalization and the realities surrounding the roles of international institutions. In particular, we thank Yingying Deng, a RESD graduate student for her excellent research assistance and insightful observations, Deborah Friedman at Interlibrary Loan for obtaining hard-to-find materials, and Greg DeLaurier and our editors at Edward Elgar for their careful work on the volume. As always, all errors and omissions are our responsibility.

Last, we feel we have a historical debt to acknowledge. In a sense, developing this volume as faculty members at UMass Lowell is coming full circle, because there are links between the original vision for development in Lowell in the early 1800s and the interest in sustainable human development that has been nurtured at the University over the past ten years. Lowell is well known historically as the site of the first integrated manufacturing mills established in the 1820s and 1830s near the beginning of the industrial revolution in the United States. The founders of manufacturing in Lowell tried to establish more humane working conditions than in the Dickensian mills in England. The largely female workforce – of young women from local farms – lived in closely supervised, well run boarding houses, were paid wages that surpassed those of school teachers, and were encouraged to engage in cultural activities when not working. However, as competition to the Lowell Mills arose on other New England rivers, this vision of a different model of capitalist industrialization was undermined. Owners began to cut wages and stretched out production (giving each worker more machines to tend) in order to preserve profits. The women resisted, staging strikes and lobbying for shorter workdays. As the women left the mills in the 1840s, they were replaced by immigrants fleeing famine and poverty in Europe. As Lowell proceeded through the next century and a half, institutions of higher education became important. One of UMass Lowell’s predecessors, Lowell Textile School, was developed to serve the needs of the textile industry while the other, Massachusetts State Normal School in Lowell, was established to serve the community. Although this original vision for more humane industrialization in Lowell did not prove sustainable, it is nevertheless appropriate and important that we continue to explore the ways in which sustainable development can be promoted in the future.

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