In many ways, my career is a metaphor for public higher education. It does not lead, but rather reacts to fundamental economic and political forces. Using a simple cultural materialism model, I see American public higher education as a component of American social structure that is defined by what happens at the economic, technological, and political levels of the system. Historically, public higher education has typically been several years behind the economy and always struggling to catch up. This being the case, it is possible to look at the nature of today’s economic and political climate and predict where public higher education will be 15 to 25 years from now. My intent is not to provide one more negative critique of public higher education, of which here have been many in recent years. It is simply an effort to be honest about the institution’s limitations and understand the direction it is moving; not leading but being led and not really planning, but in some ways stumbling into a future controlled by forces greater than the higher education establishment itself.