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**Abstract**

Since the well-known failures of many experimental colleges and programs in the 1960s and 1970s, policymakers and scholars are often cynical about the possibilities for organisational innovation, particularly within public universities. Public university innovation is possible, however, when organisational actors seek to institutionalise reform and use the legitimacy of reform to obtain adequate human and financial resources. An illustrative case study of California State University at Monterey Bay is used to describe how institutionalisation processes can be used to establish, support and expand public university innovation, which may be increasingly crucial to meet political and competitive demands for university adaptation. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)