The EvoLLLution presents

2016
A Year in Review

The evoLLLution
A DESTINY SOLUTIONS ILLUMINATION

From the Editor

Since launching in 2012, The EvoLLLution's Year in Review series has looked back on the major shifts that changed the way higher education worked. From MOOCs and the mainstreaming of online education to the growth of commoditization to renewed interest in operational efficiency, every year we've seen significant shifts in the way the market worked.

2016 has been a little different. This year, there hasn't been the same industry-wide fervour pushing us toward a new shiny thing. Instead, in 2016 a lot of the changes we've observed over the past half-decade evolved into meaningful trends.

Understanding of the importance of meeting students' expectations has led us beyond the recognition of the value of customer service. We're now having conversations about what student-centricity really means, and whether the rankings and ratings that traditionally measured the success of institutions are truly reflective of their performance.

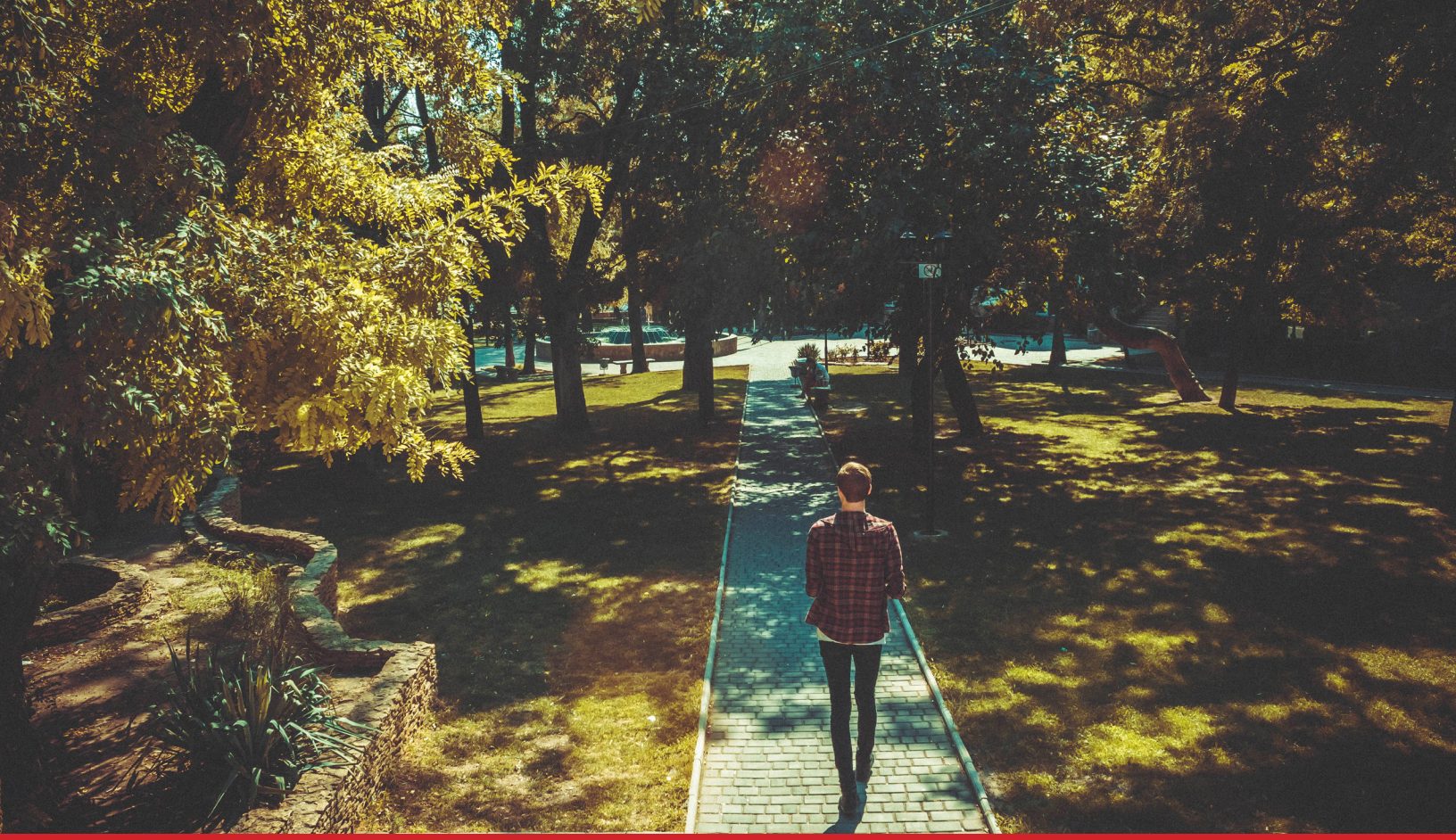
The focus on improving efficiencies has led to more and more questions around what it takes to manage a viable and sustainable postsecondary organization. Administrators are now more focused on effective business processes—and the capacity for technology to help—than ever before.

As our industry evolves, so too do we. Must we. More than anything, this has been the major trend in higher education in 2016.

Please enjoy this Year in Review eBook, and thanks for reading!

Contents

Contents



Chapter 1

Reimagining Higher Education

NEW AND INNOVATIVE MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Redefining Excellence and Transforming the Institution

MICHAEL CROW
PRESIDENT, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Since the first release of institutional rankings, colleges and universities have competed to climb the list and invest in the factors that would allow for higher placement, all the while cementing standards to define a successful institution. But how well do these rankings measure the elements that are truly necessary for today's students and economy? In this interview, Arizona State University President Michael Crow reflects on the importance of student-centricity for today's institutions and shares his thoughts on how the ideal institutional model needs to be redefined to suit the modern context.

The EvoLLLution (Evo): How relevant are rankings when it comes to defining the relative success of an institution in today's postsecondary environment?

Michael Crow (MC): In general, we don't obsess over rankings because most of them are measuring the wrong things—selectivity, inputs, the most dollars spent. Rankings would be better focused on outputs, particularly student performance and producing more graduates.

The U.S. is facing significant shortages of educated workers as well as inequalities that minimize chances for success based on zip code. Expanding the pool of capable graduates should be a valued measure of success. Two years ago ASU joined forces with 11 public universities to share best practices, find innovations that can raise quality and expand the number of graduates. At a White House summit, we made a shared commitment to graduating an additional 68,000 students by 2025. Alliance members are already sharing ways to improve student success across our campuses. But the goal here is to improve outcomes for our students, not to climb rankings.

Evo: Why is access more important than exclusivity for today's higher education institutions?

MC: Many leading research universities deem it appropriate to maintain limited enrollments while excluding the majority of applicants, some of whom surely would be capable of succeeding. Recognizing this, other research-grade academic platforms must emerge that offer accessibility to substantially greater numbers of students—especially among public research universities, which typically serve more first-generation and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

Moreover, limiting accessibility to research-grade institutions fails

to recognize workforce projections that indicate a shortfall of five million educated workers by 2020. The idea that these institutions should pursue a path of producing millions of highly qualified, workforce-ready critical thinkers threatens their current business model.

Lastly, as de facto national policy, excluding the majority of academically qualified students from the excellence of a research-grade university education is counterproductive and ethically unacceptable.

Evo: How else does the institutional model you describe in *Designing the New American University* get away from the standard institutional model?

MC: Most universities are trying to emulate relatively small "elite" universities. They have become faculty-centric instead of student-centric, and as a result they are misdirecting scarce resources and excluding capable students. Students can receive a quality education at many of these institutions, but they are not designed to educate young people at the scale needed today.

> Rankings would be better focused on outputs, particularly student performance and producing more graduates.

What we need is an alternative vision for American universities that is focused on access, excellence and impact. We need to create institutions dedicated to accessibility and public service that are more adaptable to a rapidly changing world and a knowledge-driven global economy. This new kind of institution has to be able to operate at scale and ensure that every qualified student has the opportunity to pursue a degree, regardless of their background. We see Arizona State University as the prototype for this model.

Evo: What does it take to match the commitment to enrollment with student retention and success?

MC: We have set aggressive targets for expanding access and raising graduation rates and producing thousands of master learners with the mental agility to adapt in a rapidly changing economy. The corollary to those plans is our commitment to continuously improving student success. Our current freshmen retention rate of 84 percent—aided by a powerful eAdvisor tool that helps students stay on track and make progress toward their degree—gives us reason to be encouraged. We also have achieved a 20 percentage-point gain in four-year graduation rates since 2002. Our involvement in and attention to improving the K-12 system will also increase the numbers of college-ready high-school graduates, especially important to expanding the numbers and success rates of traditionally under-represented minority communities.

Evo: To your mind, what are the factors that must be in place for an institution to be truly student-centric?

MC: We look to a future in which universities will be measured based on how their students succeed, and not only on how much research their faculty produces. In addition to touting faculty achievements, schools should expand their focus to emphasize student achievement and completion rates.

The ideas of accessibility and student-centricity are closely related. Our commitment to providing a high-quality college education at a leading research university to as many qualified students as possible is a key part of this. Our expanding approaches to teaching and learning through a combination of full immersion on-campus, digital immersion online and a hybrid of these two is another critical piece of making higher education accessible, useful and capable of providing increasingly meaningful educational experiences. So is our intense focus on solving real-world challenges to both expand our societal impact and give students a chance to make a difference during their studies and afterward. We also are continuing to look for partnerships with other institutions both in the U.S. and around the world to expand the offerings and opportunities available to students. Our new PLuS Alliance with King's College London and UNSW is an example of our focus on expanding student access to world-class learning.

HIGHER ED AS A BUSINESS

We Must Find New Ways To Determine Institutional Value

RICHARD DEMILLO
DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITIES,
GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Today's students have more choices than ever before and, while it gives them a great deal of power as customers, it can also make the college selection process immensely confusing. Popular ranking systems are supposed to serve as a valuable tool to help students find the institution that's best for them, but these rankings often obfuscate the process more than they clarify. In this interview, Richard DeMillo explores the most significant issues with the currently available ratings and rankings systems, and shares his thoughts on the factors that need to be considered if developing a truly representative, student-centric ranking system.

The EvoLLLution (Evo): What impact do institutional rankings—like those published by US World and News—have on the higher education marketplace?

Richard DeMillo (RD): The idea of ranking institutions skews every aspect of the academic marketplace. A ranking, by its very nature, leads readers to believe that a 10th ranked institutions is better than one that is ranked 11th. Students and families make decisions based on numbers like these, and the underlying premise is flawed.

There are so many factors that determine success later in life and focusing attention on a ranking ignores a student's aspirations, choice of major, and classroom performance—all of which are more important than the ranking of the institution. Colleges know that families take rankings seriously and that drives questionable behavior on the part of the institution.

Selectivity, for example, plays a key role in rankings, but the evidence is that selectivity plays almost no role in the quality of the educational experience. The result is that schools systematically exclude students who would do well and are interested in attending because including them would negatively impact rankings.

Evo: What kinds of factors are highlighted by these ranking systems to define the best and worst institutions?

RD: There is remarkably little variation in the top ranked institutions, but those schools also tend to be the ones whose brands have become associated with elite, high-quality education. The top 20 global universities include the same 10 American

colleges that are highly ranked by the US News and World Rankings and others. These are the schools with elite brands; the rankings play no role in that.

At the other end of the scale, the notion that there are schools that are "worse" because they are not highly ranked is also suspect. An inclusive public university is almost guaranteed a low ranking. Selectivity, faculty-student ratios, and subjective reputations are important to achieving a high ranking, although educational value is largely unrelated to these factors.

Evo: How well do these factors mirror the expectations and demands of today's students—especially given the number of traditional-age and adult learners who are working and focused on outcomes?

RD: I am not a believer in the story that ties rankings to value. That is primarily due to the huge disconnect between outcomes and the factors that influence rankings.

Colleges know that families take rankings seriously and that drives questionable behavior on the part of the institution.

Evo: What kinds of factors should be taken into account when creating a ranking system that speaks to the needs of today's learners?

RD: I am philosophically opposed to assigning single figures of merit to quality, but if you were serious about a rating system that would single out certain institutions for special attention, you might start with outcome-based measurements.

For example, I would like to know whether an institution does well for students that are "like me." That's not captured by existing rankings. Another thing not captured by today's popular rankings is long-term career success or lifetime earnings potential. I would like to know about a school's successes, and aside from its obvious successes, I would also like to know what happens to most of its graduates. It would also be useful to know how important an institution is to its city, state or region. There are dozens of factors like these that are genuine indicators of institutional quality, and any future rating systems should take them into account.

Evo: What will it take for such a ranking system to become mainstream?

RD: Proliferation of new institutions and programs will eventually cause real problems for existing one-dimensional ranking systems. You can already see the effects of return-on-investment rankings like the one published annually by Payscale.com on the industry. I expect those systems will move very quickly into the mainstream.

ACCESSIBILITY

Holding the Fort While Forging Ahead: Improving Degree Completion and Transfer at Two-Year Colleges

LENORE RODICIO
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST, MIAMI DADE COLLEGE

Traditionally, the programming at community colleges can be divided into two broad categories: short-term workforce training, and 2+2 programs that prepare students for transfer to continued studies at four-year institutions. Depending on the institution and the community it serves, the proportion of degrees awarded in these two categories can vary. As an example, at my institution, Miami Dade College (MDC), 12 percent of our completers graduate with college credit (CCC) or vocational certificates, 11 percent with associate in science (AS) degrees, 67 percent with associate in arts (AA) degrees, and 10 percent with baccalaureate degrees.

Recently, much of the national dialogue has shifted to focus on degree completion, and more specifically, on degree completion in key workforce areas such as STEM. As this conversation continues to evolve, many worry that this focus on degree completion in the short term will erode the transfer missions of community colleges.

In my view, it is not an either/or conversation, but a both/and conversation.

Short-term programs leading to competitive jobs have always been a central part of the community college mission. The economic viability of any given community is dependent on employers having a stable, dependable pipeline of appropriately credentialed workers. The creation of this pipeline requires thoughtfully crafted, stackable credentials that run the gamut from non-credit training programs to short-term college credit programs to more advanced degrees. At MDC, we ensure our alignment with our local workforce partners through the creation of programmatic advisory boards where members of the local industries provided real-time feedback on their needs. The results of these interactions are dynamic, flexible programs that are in line with current and anticipated workforce needs. Coupling these programs with short-term certificate programs also ensures that community colleges are meeting new accountability

requirements for degree completion, while allowing students to reach career and educational milestones on their way to additional educational attainment.

However, the push towards short-term, stackable credentials is not necessarily at odds with the transfer mission of community colleges. In many cases credits can be applied across multiple degree pathways, allowing the flexibility for students to continue to advance in their career pathways and earn higher credentials.

In many ways, the state of Florida has led the way in sustaining transfer programs. Here, the shift to accountability and completion has not changed the attention to transfer, but has actually reinforced the transfer mission. Florida policymakers understand that Florida's economic prosperity relies on building up the educational attainment of its population. Florida's community colleges were created not only to support local, short-term workforce needs, but to also serve as feeders to the state universities.

The push towards short-term, stackable credentials is not necessarily at odds with the transfer mission of community colleges. In many cases credits can be applied across multiple degree pathways, allowing the flexibility for students to continue to advance in their career pathways and earn higher credentials..

Currently, Florida has a statewide course numbering system that applies across all programs of study, ensuring seamless transition of prior coursework across the state's colleges and universities. In addition, to preserve the 2+2 mission while incentivizing degree completion, AA completers from Florida's community colleges are guaranteed admission to one of Florida's state universities. In fact, recent data from the Florida Department of Education indicates half of all juniors and seniors at Florida's state universities were transfers from the community college system. At a more local level, community colleges work with their neighboring state universities to bolster student success as they transfer to their junior year of studies. At MDC, over 60 percent of our AA students transfer to Florida International University. To ensure their success, we have collaborated through our "Connect4Success" program to ensure that not only our course numbers, but our curricula and our student support practices are aligned to support our students and ensure their success at both the two-year and four-year level.

As we look towards the future of community colleges, there are two key areas that I would point to as worthy of monitoring. The first is baccalaureate degree offerings at community colleges. This particular trend has generated much national debate on the role of community colleges. Here at MDC as well as other Florida state colleges, we now offer baccalaureate degrees in targeted workforce areas such as education, information technology, nursing and supervision/management. The development of these baccalaureate programs has been accomplished in concert with (and not at odds with) our state universities. Programs are offered at the community college only where a workforce gap still remains that cannot be filled by the state university programs.

The second is the evolution of the college credential. Across the nation, we continue to define educational attainment based on a centuries-old model of higher education. In today's market, employers are more interested in specific skill sets, not necessarily a specific type of degree. Community colleges will be key in leading the way in this frontier. Our existing, responsive programs are a first step in this direction, but there is still a long road ahead as we look to expand higher education to massive numbers of individuals to support our nation's growing economy.

NEW AND INNOVATIVE MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Cracking Open the Red Bull: Entrepreneurialism in Higher Education

MELISSA VITO
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT AND SENIOR VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC INITIATIVES AND STUDENT SUCCESS, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Hanging on my office wall is a colorful Warhol-esque portrait. But where we would expect to see an iconic celebrity like Marilyn Monroe or Elvis, there is instead an icon of a different kind: a can of Red Bull. Energy, velocity, achievement, *action*—these are all things we associate with the energy drink brand.

Why don't we associate those same ideas with higher education?

More than ever, it seems that the value of higher education is questioned while the role of entrepreneurs is lionized. The Thiel Fellowships, founded by successful entrepreneur Peter Thiel, proposed to give 20 fellowships for young entrepreneurs to skip college altogether and develop their own ideas. Thiel's notion that "Some ideas just can't wait" seemed squarely at odds with higher education, creating a persistent narrative that higher ed discourages potential entrepreneurs with unnecessary hoops and red tape.

But what about entrepreneurship within the institution of higher education itself? It is understandable why skeptics would roll their eyes at this very idea. Because the fact is, the entrepreneurial gap that they often point to is real. The problem rests squarely in university administrative structures and functions: namely, the leaders (VP's, provosts, deans, directors and others) of administrative offices of universities across the country.

These vast, complex areas that encompass teaching, learning, student support, research, facilities and business functions are critical to the long-term strategic objectives of universities. And yet, in most instances they reflect the most traditional, bureaucratic and risk-averse areas of higher education. While research faculty are pursuing the frontiers of knowledge and students are developing apps and other tools to improve their lives, most administrative structures have continued to function unchanged for decades. Why?

This structural dissonance fuels internal and external pressures on campuses. Internally, both students and faculty are frequently

frustrated by the slow pace of change. Externally, higher education is seen to be in dire need of adopting business practices for its own good. Yes, there are lots of legitimate reasons for administrative sluggishness—multiple and competing constituent needs create tension in decision making; decentralized, siloed reporting structures, etc. However, those of us seeking to inject some Red Bull into our culture and truly nurture an entrepreneurial spirit cannot afford to let potential risk be an idea-stopper. We must evolve.

When an idea first crosses their desks many administrators employ traditional tools—task forces, committees, multiple levels of review, etc. And in the end, while these may mitigate some risk, or even improve an original idea through broader input, they very often drain or kill the entrepreneurial approach, which thrives on creativity, new ideas, and the ability to move quickly. Fueling an entrepreneurial spirit leads to a more competitive, enterprising, and effective organization in higher education—one that is more responsive and focused on eliminating problems.

Administrators often feel concerned about setting a negative precedent or lowering standards when faced with change or new ideas. And while this sense of fidelity to higher standards certainly has its place in higher education, it often comes at the expense of entrepreneurship. How many levels of approval are actually necessary for most actions? Universities must be among the few organizations that have entire offices dedicated to honoring and maintaining the past. This reverberating reverence for the past sometimes masks the need for higher education to move quickly and to update or abandon processes that have, frankly, outlived their usefulness.

I oversee a large administrative area, one that includes teaching, learning, technology, student support and auxiliary functions and we compete in a competitive market. Sadly, I have seen many good ideas find early graves because they became entangled in process. As a result, I am passionate about leading an organization that is agile, smart, creative and, in fact entrepreneurial! I have learned over time that your culture either supports or inhibits entrepreneurialism, so I work hard to build an environment that cultivates and breeds success. So what is the "secret sauce" to developing and nurturing an entrepreneurial culture?

1. Optimistic leadership: Leaders must set a tone of possibility and potential and "yes." Diminished resources, while real, must be seen as an opportunity to rethink how we do what we do or to seek multiple investors, rather than stopping progress.

2. Open mindedness: Do not respond to a good idea with "how much will this cost?" First seek to understand what will be achieved and then work through the budget.

3. Foster intelligent risk: At the University of Arizona, we are known for implementing building blocks of ideas or short term "pilot" projects simply to manage expectations and create an environment where staff want to try something new.

4. Move quickly and be responsive: Administrators are known for slow decision making and responsiveness. We work hard to respond quickly and move into production before an original idea loses its spark.

5. Check the environment: Encourage staff to engage with the outside world and connect the dots in experiences to help understand the current and future environment. Anticipate what students will need tomorrow, not today; watch what high school and middle school students are doing; pay attention to where people meet, how they receive information and all other parts of the human experience that should inform our work.

6. Build a great team: Hire smart people and provide clear expectations and support. Team members must be comfortable with a faster than normal pace. Safety in taking risks will only happen if the team knows that leadership has their back.

7. Share your victories: Tout successes and convey them in the context of broad visionary goals. Create a culture of momentum, velocity, and relevance and be strategic and energetic in communication.

8. Be aware of the limits: Understand what we can control and influence and work in that environment. Avoid broad issues that suck resources and spirit and cannot be impacted by our work.

9. Keep goals top of mind: Make sure that goals are clearly visible and continually revisited. Inspire and reward faculty and staff who contribute uniquely to achieving these goals.

What is the result of this approach? Entrepreneurial innovation in higher education; increased opportunities for students to succeed; better, more timely support for internal and external constituencies; a more rewarding workplace (and yes, plenty of Red Bull cans in the office).

OPERATIONS AND EFFICIENCY

Continuing Education as a Strategic Asset

JASON LEMON
DEAN OF PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

University extension, continuing education, professional studies. The names and functions for this academic area are as distinct and unique as the colleges and universities where they operate. Some universities have offered professional and continuing education for more than a century as an effort to serve their communities, support their alumni, or to fulfill public mandates and institutional missions. Others, perhaps more recently, have started professional and continuing education units in order to create surplus revenues to contribute to the overall benefit of the institution.

Institutions of higher education seeking to compete in the 21st century will need to reimagine their professional and continuing education units as something more than just an extension of the university, an outreach effort, or revenue stream. They need to leverage these assets more broadly to create strategic advantages for the entire university.

In recent years professional and continuing education units at universities have developed and refined numerous higher education strategies, services and approaches. They have learned how to attract and serve non-traditional students—and in the 21st century most learners now fit the non-traditional profile.

Continuing education units have developed systems to offer and support schedule flexibility—evening, weekend and accelerated options are now expected by working professional students.

Many universities have discovered that their professional and continuing education units possess the deepest expertise for developing and delivering successful online and hybrid programs.

Competency-based programs, credit for prior learning, and many other progressive achievements in higher education began with professional and continuing education innovations.

Successful universities will engage the serious challenges facing higher education—unsustainable tuition fees, increasing competition, demographic shifts, declining enrollments, increasing employer expectations of graduates, etc.—and deploy the expertise and assets of professional and continuing education as part of their solution.

A quick review of degrees offered and awarded by colleges and universities shows that some schools have already adapted the professional and continuing education skill set for new degree development. These schools have experienced success because

they have created degree programs that attract large audiences and deliver earning power for their graduates.

Schools that have already adopted the expertise and experience of their professional and continuing education units approach degree program development and delivery differently than those schools that have not. Some of them have explicitly given the task of degree innovation, professional degrees, and online programs to their continuing education units.

The names and functions for this academic area are as distinct and unique as the colleges and universities where they operate.

Successful creation and growth of professional degree programs in these schools is marked by rigorous audience research, comprehensive competitive research, interviews and dialogue with professionals in the field and future employers. These schools also spend time understanding the prospective students' opinions and preferences for schedule, location and learning modality. Providing the support services required for working adult students is something that professional and continuing education units understand and do. Another distinguishing factor: Their development timelines for launching these programs tend to be measured in months and not years.

Strategic assets produce many benefits. When professional and continuing education units deliver results—high-quality learning outcomes, predictable enrollments, budget surpluses, employed graduates and industry partnerships—their institutions will place greater strategic emphasis on their proven methods and expertise.

When recognized and deployed by an institution, the expertise and experience of professional and continuing education can produce significant positive results on a school's ability to compete and succeed in the face of upcoming challenges. New degree programs, higher levels of community engagement, and new opportunities for students to experience life-changing learning and career growth are the results that make this strategic shift so important and worthwhile.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer Service in the Higher Education Context: Finally Putting Students First

ELISABETH REES JOHNSTONE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT OISE, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

In 2014, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, global industry and government leaders from all sectors declared that we are in the *Age of the Customer.*

The *Age of the Customer* concept effectively states that consumers are more empowered than ever before because, through the advances of technology, they can access information and services via digital channels and in real time. A consumer's ability to access information has resulted in a sea change in our global marketplace. Informed consumers are quick to research and also share their opinions online. As a result of this access to, and real-time sharing of information, organizations (whether private, public, big or small) are having to change how they interact with current and potential customers in order to not only build a brand but sustain it as well.

In the *Age of the Customer*, organizations are responding by changing all aspects of how they work and interact with current and prospective customers:

Marketing teams have had to adjust how they attract and engage with more informed consumers and how they move from mass-market "push" messaging to a more personalized approach; they have had to re-evaluate their content marketing strategies as consumers have an expectation that they will be not only be informed, but educated as well.

Communications teams are navigating multiple communication channels as consumers readily contact an organization by email, phone, live chat on a website and through social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Sales teams are having to work in lock step with their information technology departments to gather data (and better data) about their customer in order to build prospects, nurture connections and secure customer retention targets.

Service teams, those on the front lines, are required to respond to consumer communications quickly and they must be even more informed and highly knowledgeable about products and services because informed customers are calling or texting already armed

with information.

As all sectors and organizations both embrace and grapple with this shift, why would we consider our education sector to be immune? The students-as-customers debate is guaranteed to stir and rattle a passionate dialogue. When I have referred to students as customers—or used the terms interchangeably when describing our learners who pay fees to attend our programs every semester—there will undoubtedly be a colleague who corrects and advises that students are not customers. I am often cautioned that the student-as-customer philosophy promotes the overindulgence of a group who will expect higher grades for little effort, who will be readily wooed by slick advertising, who will force education institutions to focus on growth for growth's sake, which will erode quality and the very essence of our role and commitment as educators.

However, the student-as-customer philosophy is not about treating education and students as products or cash cows, and it is not about easy grades, or following the "customer is always right" slogan by changing policies to meet unrealistic expectations. It is about a paradigm shift to customer centricity.

In education, I believe we are navigating the *Age of the Customer* through our active promotion and commitment to great teaching practice in the classroom—whether that classroom is on campus or online. We accept that great teaching is centered around learners and we are responding, like all other sectors, to the great digital tsunami that is shaping and shifting our relationships with our learners. We are moving from institution-centric practices to learner-centric ones to meet the needs of learners and respond to the shift in market dynamics.

While we readily accept the notion of learner centricity for the classroom, we need to move beyond the classroom and consider how we might carry this learner-centric philosophy to our education operations. In the *Age of the Customer*, transforming the customer experience is a critical market imperative for all organizations and this is true for education as well. To be truly learner/customer-centric is to have every colleague on our teams committed to the customer experience, and in my view, that's being committed to the success of that learner. This requires weaving a culture of service into the ethos of the organization and empowering teams to both anticipate and react to learner needs at all touchpoints in their learning journey with our organization—from the time they are inquiring about a learning solution to the time they receive recognition for successful completion of their learning and beyond. To achieve this also requires a commitment to actively participating in a digital environment.

In the next couple of years, organizations that don't adapt and adopt digital practices will look increasingly out of date and out of touch. In leading a continuing education division, I am witnessing that digital skills are in high demand as is the need for digitally fluent, savvy leadership across all sectors. We have a responsibility to develop these skills in others, as well as ourselves.

Customer experience and customer centricity are often deemed subjective topics, but the long-term financial benefits and brand capital is well documented and unmistakable. At OISE Continuing and Professional Learning, we have started with this guiding statement:

Engage the world's educators and empower one another to create environments where learning thrives

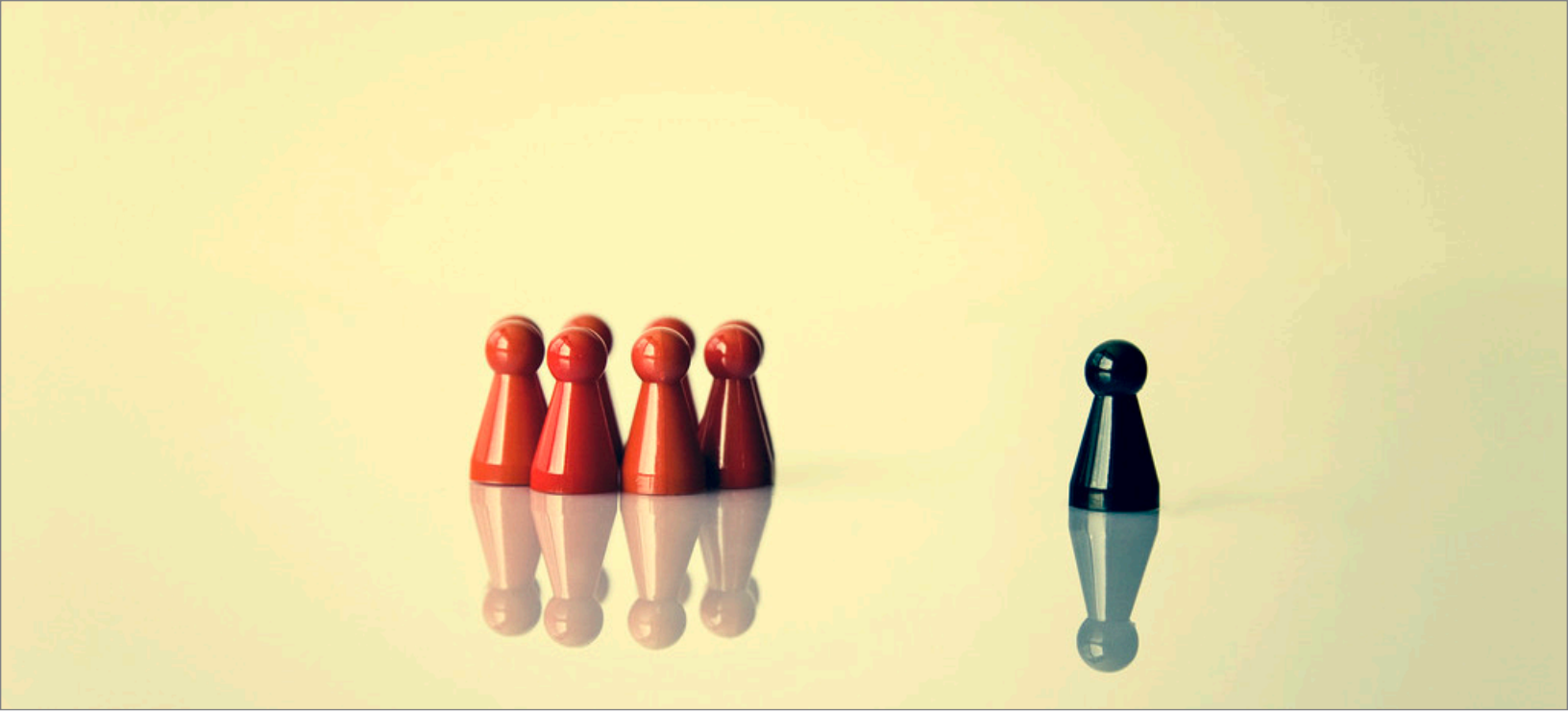
We are evolving and developing our operations, our programming and our talent around this commitment. By making this a part of our everyday, we are committed to creating a customer-centric continuing education division.

The students-as-customers conversation is on a par with the concept of learning online—there are still folks out there who question whether online learning should be happening. Digital engagement is not about technology; it is about customer experience and leadership. Just as technology has become ubiquitous, so too has customer experience, and to not recognize this is simply perilous.

Institution Centric	Learner Centric
Teaching	Learning
Command, control	Support, care
Classroom, event-based, finite	Flexible, 24/7, continuous
Nominal, 1:1 feedback	Continuous feedback, Many:1 feedback

Chapter 2

Making Higher Ed Relevant to Students



METRICS

Student Success Measurements Must Be Centered on Student Needs

JOIANNE SMITH
PRESIDENT, OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Community colleges offer convenient access to an affordable education that revolves around student schedules and finances, making them a popular option for many. Demand for education delivered by these institutions is growing; from 2000-2010, the number of students enrolled at community colleges across the country has increased 26 percent from 5.7 million to 7.2 million students.

Because they serve the local communities in which they are located, community colleges must serve students with varied life circumstances. According to the Center for American Progress, the overwhelming majority of students must work, and half of community college students work full time. Community colleges offer the convenience of evening and online classes to fit their needs.

Many students need remedial study before getting into their area of focus. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that more than 40 percent of all students who attend community college enroll in at least one developmental class, often more.

Community colleges serve traditional college-age students preparing to transfer to a four-year institution, provide a low-cost alternative for general education courses required by these institutions and provide access for older students making career shifts. Many attend community colleges for reasons other than degree completion, and their specific goals should be taken into consideration. Community colleges welcome and accommodate all of these students and more.

However, these same attributes that draw people to community colleges also affect performance statistics. According to NCES, only 13 percent of community college students earn a degree in two years. That number jumps to 22 percent after three years and 28 percent after four years.

At Oakton Community College, the graduation rate is about 17 percent within three years according to Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data, which is below the national average. Oakton is working hard to bolster support services to improve completion rates for students. Areas of focus include providing student support services in the areas of alignment of curriculum with K-12 partners, developmental education, retention and support services, financial literacy, workforce development and career pathways.

While concerning, this data point does not tell the whole story. Oakton is among the national leaders in three-year transfer rates for full-time, first-time students. The combination of completion and transfer rates for this group is 54 percent—more than three times higher than the graduation rate alone.

Further, not all students are included in IPEDS data. Students who have already attended another postsecondary institution and those who began their studies on a part-time basis are not included in these rates. At Oakton, only 29 percent of students were counted among full-time, first-time students in 2014. That means that more than two thirds of students are not counted for this statistic.

Another area of concern for community colleges is their exclusion from the federal government's College Scorecard. Seventeen percent of all degree-granting community colleges are not included in the scorecard. That's nearly one in five colleges. If an institution awarded more certificates than degrees, then it is not labeled as having "predominantly awarded two-year or four-year degrees" and is therefore excluded from the list.

Largely due to their community-serving mission, community colleges innovating with certificates and stackable credentials are most profoundly affected. This is a problem.

So what is the best way to measure community colleges? Here are some suggestions:

- Assess the success of students based upon their goal at the time of application, rather than assuming that all students seek to earn a degree.
- Abandon the first-time, full-time cohort and measure the groups not currently measured, including those that enter as transfers from other institutions and those entering as part-time students.
- Track students longer than three or four years, using six-year reporting to allow for students entering and enrolling with remedial courses and also recognizing life circumstances. This would count many graduates ignored by the current federal methodology and would be consistent with American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) accountability practices.
- Use transfer as an indicator of success, as many community college students successfully transfer and earn a bachelor's degree without first earning a two-year credential.
- Consider certificate earners as completers, as many career and technical education students are enrolled in certificate programs that lead to gainful employment.
- Include colleges that provide students the opportunity to earn credentials such as certificates in the College Scorecard to validate students' efforts to better their lives as they balance work and college and earn higher compensation in the process.

A Student Achievement Measure (SAM) proposed in 2013 would go a long way in accomplishing these goals. For community college associate and certificate programs, SAM would examine data on:

- Full-time students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including new and transfer students).
- Part-time students attending the reporting institution for the first time (including new students and transfers from other institutions).

For each of these groups, the SAM would record these students into the following categories:

- Graduated from the reporting institution.
- Are still enrolled at the reporting institution.
- Transferred to one or more subsequent institutions.
- Have unknown transfer, current enrollment or graduation status.

SAM is endorsed by the AACC, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Council on Education, the Association of American Universities, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

By instituting reforms such as those suggested, student success measurements would more accurately reflect the role community colleges play in the regions they serve and would allow colleges to better serve students' needs based on their specific education goals, rather than a federal formula.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Finding Metrics that Matter to Adult Students

JAVIER MIYARES
PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Rankings and rating systems have forever changed the way we behave as consumers. We read Amazon reviews before ordering a kitchen blender. We check out Yelp before visiting a new restaurant. We consult Netflix before committing to a new television series.

It's only natural that when it comes to choosing which college or university to attend, we want to know how our choices stack up.

And, in fact, there is no shortage of available rankings. A range of print and online publications attempt to evaluate various programs and institutions on what are often vastly different criteria. Even the U.S. Department of Education entered the game when it introduced the College Scorecard comparison tool in 2013.

For University of Maryland University College (UMUC)—the nation's largest online public university, with more than 82,000 adult students—the ratings game can be a maddening one.

For almost 70 years, our mission has focused on bringing education within reach for adult learners, and student success has been a central measure of our effectiveness. However, for adult students, the path to a degree is often a long one, as they juggle the competing responsibilities of jobs, families and even military service.

Yet in some ranking systems, a student who takes eight years to complete an undergraduate degree isn't counted among "successful" graduates.

Another measure takes into consideration the number of books that a university holds in its library. At UMUC, with some 85 percent of our classes offered online, we don't have a physical library—but we do have online library services that offer access to *hundreds* of online databases, many with instant access, 24/7, to full-text versions of academic journals, books, magazines, and newspapers. We also have staff librarians on call with expertise in conducting online research, and we offer extended hours to accommodate our students overseas.

What about the number of full-time faculty on staff? Tenure, which typically depends on a faculty member's publication record, may have little if any bearing on their effectiveness as a teacher. In fact, adjunct faculty who work full-time in the fields in which they teach may be far *more* effective in an online classroom, better

informed about current trends in their respective industries, and often better able to advise adult student on their career choices.

What about graduation rates? By one common measure used by the U.S. Department of Education, UMUC's graduation rate is less than 5 percent—wholly ludicrous when you consider that we graduated more than 10,000 students worldwide *last year alone*. Unfortunately, the official graduation rate is based on the six-year graduation rate of full-time, first-time students—very few of whom enroll at UMUC. Most of our students transfer from other institutions.

Another common measure of an institution's "quality" turns on the academic achievements of its first-year students—the grade-point average that those students earned in high school, their scores on the SATs and ACTs, and the number of National Merit finalists in their ranks.

Now, without doubt, those students with high scores are more likely to succeed in college and in life. But can the institution provide the support and resources necessary for *all* students to succeed—including those from less privileged backgrounds or from different educational paths?

We believe that a college or university should be measured by learning outcomes—what students learn and truly master, and whether they can apply it in the workplace.

These are just a few of the reasons that we at UMUC typically decline to participate in ranking surveys (although we are listed in the College Scorecard). We believe that a college or university should be measured by learning outcomes—what students learn and truly master, and whether they can apply it in the workplace.

To date, no widely agreed-upon metric exists for assessing learning outcomes, but UMUC does post information and data that we believe are important measures that prospective students can use to compare UMUC to other universities.

Our UMUC Student Profile provides information about our student population, including long-term graduation rates, employment and salary data, cost to attend, and the results of student satisfaction surveys.

Thus, we applaud the federal government for launching the College Scorecard. While it has its limitations—such as using an outmoded metric to measure graduation rates—it includes helpful comparison information like salary after attending, cost, student financial aid, and debt upon graduation.

At UMUC, our students pay low tuition, and when they graduate, they earn more than the national average for recent college graduates—and they have fewer loans to repay.

Those figure among our measures of success, and it is time for the ratings and rankings industry to recalibrate—based on the needs of consumers—and start to measure those data points that matter to adult students.

HIGHER ED AS A BUSINESS

The Differentiating Power of Alternative Credentials

CATHY SANDEEN
CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN COLLEGES AND EXTENSION

Leaders at colleges and universities around the country are looking at different ways to integrate alternative and microcredentials into their roster of offerings. After all, they have been shown in many cases to provide a great deal of value for students. The one stopping point for many leaders is the impact they could have on the institution's brand—but is that a fair critique? In this interview, Cathy Sandeen shares her thoughts on how microcredentials can serve as a differentiator for institutions, and discusses the factors that must be in place to ensure a positive impact on institutional brand.

The EvoLLLution (Evo): Why are badges and other microcredentials growing so much in popularity?

Cathy Sandeen (CS): Badges or microcredentials have been around for quite some time—if you go back to the Mozilla Foundation's digital badges, they've been on the scene for well over 10 years. Microcredentials are not a brand new thing, they're just gaining momentum now. Part of that momentum goes back to the importance of competencies.

Both within higher education and also out there with employers, we're acknowledging the fact that it's useful to validate individuals' mastery of certain skills, knowledge and abilities at a more granular level than a whole degree.

Microcredentials are riding the wave of several trends, but chief among them are the pivot towards more defined competencies—and their validation—the pivot towards workplace and employee relevant skills and abilities, and the pivot towards the increased use of technology. These three trends come together and really magnify the place of microcredentials in the postsecondary ecosystem.

Evo: Why are alternative credentials particularly important for providers of continuing education and community colleges?

CS: Alternative credentials are particularly important in our space because they are a way of communicating and conveying the whole person: the range of ideas, skills, knowledge and abilities that a person has mastered.

A typical transcript is actually pretty vague. You have a list of courses and course numbers and grades that somehow add up to a degree, and the assumption is that the person knows something after having gone through this experience. I think that the use of

digital badges and microcredentials really paints a deeper and more accurate picture of what an individual has accomplished and learned. Any institution of higher learning that is relevant and paying attention to current trends will at least dip a toe in the water of microcredentials and see how they work for them.

It's also important to note that, when we're talking about alternative credentials, no one is saying that they should take the place of a degree. In fact, in many cases, microcredentials present a way of adding more detail about what the degree includes. In the world of continuing education, these microcredentials are a great way to validate and document professional development activities.

Evo: How does a robust offering of microcredentials help an institution stand out from other colleges and universities in today's very competitive higher ed environment?

CS: In order to discuss differentiating power, we need to go back to discussing what a digital badge or a microcredential is. It's not just a cute logo or picture representing a skill a person has acquired. Beneath the surface symbol is a whole infrastructure that provides an indication of the learning outcomes that were mastered, how the student was assessed, and what they had to do to prove that they had mastered this knowledge and these skills.

What's more, there is also some indication as to the identity of the validator. Implicit in the digital badge is that it has been issued by a quality institution who has put very rigorous and relevant standards behind the microcredential. An institution could align with different professional associations and the highest quality badge issuers to help it support the brand of the institution and help that institution stand out.

At the same time, and more importantly, the institution is helping the students stand out because this is a very open environment where anyone can issue a badge, but it's a self-policing community where, over time, the high-quality badges and microcredentials will rise to the top and students and employers will recognize those.

An institution can enhance its own reputation by being very thoughtful and systematic about which badge issuers they align with. Also, if an institution becomes a badge issuer itself, it's critical that they pay close attention to guiding criteria and assessments. The worst thing that we can do in the microcredential space is to create easy to earn, cheap badges that people use to pad their resumes. That's not what this is all about—it has to be about quality.

Evo: What do you think it's going to take to ensure that we really maintain that focus on quality so that the badges don't become another thing to ignore?

CS: Again, this is an open, self-policing environment. It's very different from traditional higher education. In higher education, to offer a degree program you have to go through multiple layers of approval processes and accreditation review—this is a whole different concept. We'll see the quality standards evolve over time and conversations with universities, continuing education providers, employers and even—if relevant—human resource departments to gauge their value and understand how they need to change. It's a very evolving environment now but it's an exciting one and I think microcredentials are here to stay.

Evo: Do you foresee a future where microcredential completion is taken into account as an institutional performance metric?

CS: Microcredentials could start to be included in institutional performance metrics, but I think that this factors more into the realm of employment.

If we're tracking where our alumni go and where they're employed and how they build their careers over time, then maybe microcredentials could play into that. It's an interesting idea, but I don't think judging an institution by the number of microcredentials it has awarded is a relevant metric right now. That's not to say that it might not evolve in that direction in the future.

Evo: Is there anything you'd like to add about the differentiating power of badges and microcredentials for college and university?

CS: We're involved in a program right now called University Learning Store, which is composed of a consortium of major universities. It's a platform where students can access multiple different types of microcredentials—from full certificate programs to digital badges—coming from reputable, high-quality providers all on one site. It's worth taking a look at because this platform is what I think is the evolution of this approach to credentialing and it could be a model for the future. It helps students to be discerning in seeking out the high-quality, validated credentials that will help them in the future.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

TODAY'S LEARNER

Career Pathways: Expanding Higher Education's Role

NELSON BAKER
DEAN OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

In today's world, a traditional university education has a short lifespan. Unlike in the not-too-distant past, a university degree no longer lasts a lifetime. As the rapid pace of the knowledge economy continues to drive the need for change in higher education, universities are grappling for solutions. While the customary role of higher education was to focus on students' formative academic years, the expectation now is to also provide an education that sustains learners throughout their careers. Rather than only deliver foundational academic learning that opens the doors to potential entry-level careers, universities must now seek ways to offer enduring educational experiences to individuals while they are in their careers. This education needs to be able to withstand the pace of change and last learners throughout their working lives.

Much work is being done in this regard. Professional degrees, certificate programs, competency-based education, alternative credentials, and other innovative offerings are becoming available to today's learners. These innovations represent the sweeping shift taking place in higher education and universities' efforts to adapt to learners' needs. But are they sufficient to keep up with the changes a learner typically experiences during the course of a career? How can universities predict the knowledge needed by its graduates 20, 30, or even 40 years into the future? Do universities' offerings enable growth across an array of career choices during one's lifetime, or are they really focused on the depth needed for a specific job?

To truly offer today's learners a durable education, universities need to provide learning opportunities that transcend job periods or career segments. We, in higher education, need to see beyond job preparation and specific fields of endeavor. In other words, we need to challenge ourselves to think more expansively in terms of career lifespans and not simply in terms of courses, credentials and jobs. If we don't broaden our thinking, we risk missing out on contributing substantially to today's learners.

We can make this contribution if we move beyond the culture of job preparation and focus, instead, on career pathways. By identifying potential career pathways for learners and offering educational opportunities to support them at any time as they progress through their professional journeys, we can help them anticipate and withstand the many changes they are bound to experience during the course of their careers. By defining these pathways for today's learners, we will enable them to build upon their acquired knowledge, skills and expertise so that they

can successfully navigate a constantly evolving world of career options and requirements. And by delivering this level of value, we will keep them engaged with our institutions throughout their lifetimes.

At Georgia Tech Professional Education, we're in the early stages of exploration with this approach. For example, we've embarked on initiatives in data gathering and research on learners. By collecting robust data on our learners' needs and interpreting it effectively, we will be able to make meaningful educational offerings that enable them to plot the course of their careers rather than merely prepare them for jobs. The more we understand our learners, their concerns, challenges, and aspirations, the more likely we are to play a significant role in their professional journeys.

As the rapid pace of the knowledge economy continues to drive the need for change in higher education, universities are grappling for solutions.

By designing courses and programs focusing on bodies of knowledge rather than on subject areas, we have already taken steps to extend the lifespan of the educational opportunities we offer. However, learners tend to transcend bodies of knowledge during their careers. For example, civil engineers often move beyond civil engineering into related careers several years after entering the field. While transitioning from subject areas to bodies of knowledge has been valuable, we recognize the need to do more. By using the data we gather to determine the points in learners' careers when they typically start exploring opportunities beyond their original bodies of knowledge, we can develop high-value programs to equip them for these types of transitions.

Another area we intend to explore is the benefits of using a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track and pinpoint specific points in learners' careers when they are likely to be interested in new career opportunities and the professional education needed to pursue them.

By expanding its role to provide educational opportunities beyond foundational academic learning, higher education can adapt to the changes and challenges it currently faces. Meeting the complex needs of today's learners entails providing innovative offerings not only to prepare them for specific jobs but also to support them throughout the course of their careers and lifetimes. If higher education takes the lead in defining career pathways for learners and guiding them through their entire career journeys, it can play a meaningful role in lifelong learning.

TODAY'S LEARNER

Normalizing Certificates and Certifications for Today's Learners

MONTY SULLIVAN
PRESIDENT, LOUISIANA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

Today's students have high expectations from their postsecondary experience, especially when it comes to outcomes. For the most part, learners are looking to complete their education and gain the basis for a high-paying job that leads to a career. This is especially true at America's community colleges. However, the focus of many two-year institutions remains on degree completion and transfer—as does that of state lawmakers—even though that pathway doesn't always fit with the goals of learners themselves. In this interview, Monty Sullivan shares his thoughts on the importance of non-degree certificate and certification programs for students.

The EvoLLLution (Evo): Why are certificates valuable and viable options for today's students?

Monty Sullivan (MS): The value of alternative options doesn't begin with the certificates or with the credential itself, but with the population and the desires of the population. More and more, we're seeing an older student population.

In this country, we have a notion that higher education is strictly sequential from secondary education, so we believe our student population must be 18 to 24 years old. In reality, however, the data shows us very clearly that a large portion of the American higher education population are of non-traditional age. This is particularly true in America's community colleges; in Louisiana, our average student's age is 27.5 years old.

As you think about that non-traditional population, these are people who very likely have been in the labor force for many years. They have worked in what you may think of as low-wage jobs, they have struggled through life. They've been to what we might refer to as the School of Hard Knocks and, as they think about their life position and begin to re-evaluate where they would like to be, they become very focused on gaining the skills they know will take them to a different place. As a result of that, certificates and credentials become extraordinarily important.

I view our institutions as being responsive to markets, and that means responsive to the needs of our student population as well as responsive to the needs of industry. We are the connector between those two groups and, in my view, there is an economic imperative driving people to pursue alternative credentials.

Evo: What are some of the key differences in the expectations of the non-traditional student that

today's institutions really need to start adapting to?

MS: I believe that our universities were created as places where a select few had the opportunity to participate in higher education. Over time, our postsecondary environment has grown into a much more democratic system where higher education has become more available through universities to much of the population.

As American community colleges developed, however, we have seen a "follow on" phenomenon take place where two-year colleges are developing themselves to look more like universities. The challenge is that the mission of community colleges is different than that of universities. At many of our universities, much of the appeal and the attraction is the beautiful buildings, the gorgeous campuses and the social aspects of campus. The really great academic programs and faculty they offer tend to come second. Now we're beginning to see community colleges follow that model, but our focus should be all about the program.

The primary reason for that is, at community colleges, we're serving people who have been through the School of Hard Knocks and that population has such a small cushion in life. There is no savings account, there is no opportunity for failure. They have to find the shortest distance between where they are and a credential that gets them to a well-paying job to support their families. I often ask our college presidents to go to their own college websites and do a very simple search: I want them to identify how many programs their institution offers that will get a student to a $15/hr job in 26 weeks. Why is 26 weeks important? Because that's how long unemployment benefits last.

There's a very significant difference between the target audiences of a community college and a traditional university. A traditional university is geared toward the 18-year-old that mom and dad have sent off to college, and they put together great financial aid packages for them to support this kid toward a bachelor's degree. At the community college, we're trying to meet the needs of the 27-year-old single mother of two who's struggling along, trying to work a job on the side, take care of kids and balance daycare. They want to make sure everything they're spending their time on in the college has value for employers. They look right past the institution to the employer and ask themselves whether they're *en route* to earning a credential that will get them a $15/hour job. This is the mindset of the postsecondary education consumer and, frankly, it's not the mindset of two- or four-year institutions. Today's students have a consumer mindset—they know what they're looking for and they're going to go to the institution that offers it.

Evo: Why is the debate around the value of sub-degree credentials still ongoing?

MS: The debate around the value of these credentials boils down to a discussion around traditional versus progressive higher education.

On one side of the argument, you have folks who are being responsive to what the market wants—to both student demand and employer demand. On the other side, you have folks who are more traditional in their beliefs about higher education and see market responsiveness as a fad.

I think economic forces will prove the traditionalists wrong over time. Certainly, there will always be value in degree programs, and there will always be value in liberal arts. In fact, liberal arts programming directly responds to the needs of employers who want employees who can think critically. However, we need to make sure we're addressing the needs of all our prospective students.

This debate is more about our willingness and ability to accomplish change and to be responsive to markets. Really, the traditional mindset of the institution is faculty-centric, but today's learners want an institution that is student-centric. Students are looking outside the institution to determine what it is they should learn as opposed to relying on the all-knowing faculty.

Evo: Do students need to be convinced of the value of pursuing certificates and certifications as well as—or maybe instead of—traditional degrees?

MS: I would not frame it as a binary; instead of thinking of it as certificate versus degree, I would think of it as certificate and then degree. Very few people fully understand the long-term implications of a certificate, though the long-term value of a degree is widely known.

We've talked a lot about getting students to jobs that pay $15/hour. However, that wage is not going to get a single mother with two kids to a place of comfort. Once students are in that first well-paying, secure job, they start to look around and figure out what's next. As such, this conversation around credentials becomes much more of a career pathway discussion.

We have seen a fundamental shift in how we understand higher

education—we used to believe higher education was a one-shot deal, but today postsecondary education is more iterative than ever before. Students are entering institutions, earning credentials, working, coming back to the institutions, earning another credential and then going back to work. This iterative approach to higher education is why I don't think it's necessarily a binary between certificates and degrees. We're already starting to see a shift in the pattern of when and how students enroll in postsecondary education, and in their flow from that first enrollment through their academic career.

Evo: Do you want to see community colleges moving more aggressively towards the stackable model?

MS: There's no question that community colleges should be working towards building more stackable options. The stackable model isn't necessarily limited to technical education—you could have a stackable approach to things like transfers. In fact, many states have this mechanism in place with a basic two-year credential that tells a university that a transferring student has accomplished the general education core for the freshmen and sophomore years at the university.

A movement towards clear, stackable pathways is something that will fundamentally change how our institutions are thinking about the success of our students.

The value of alternative options doesn't begin with the certificates or with the credential itself, but with the population and the desires of the population.

Evo: What needs to change in order for us to get to this reality this market?

MS: Adjusting to this new demand and these new, consumer-minded students requires a fundamental shift in our institutions overall.

It really begins with a fundamental shift in how we think of how our students arrive at our doors. We're currently in orientation season, where students are showing up on campuses nationwide to be oriented. This is a time when we anticipate 18-year-old kids who just graduated from high school showing up on college campuses, and the orientation process is designed for—and probably works for—those traditional students. But for the non-traditional student, they're thinking about having to give up a day of work, pay for child care and find transportation to participate in the orientation. They have a completely different set of concerns and their needs from the orientation process differs completely. The fundamental challenge here is that our institutions need to become more aware of the population that we're serving. The external perspective from employers is that higher education institutions need to be working to close the skills gap. If you look at the number of kids graduating high school every year, there's no way that educating every high school graduate is ever going to close that skills gap. On the other end, the population of adults without a college credential is massive. To use Louisiana as an example, we have about 40,000 kids who graduate high school each year. On the other hand, we have 1.65 million adults with no college credential. You tell me which group we should target. For us to close the skills gap demands a fundamental change in our perspective.

We also need to make sure the programs and courses we teach are aligned with market demands. This begins with a data analysis of what jobs are available, what jobs are well-paying or family-sustaining jobs, and then understanding what education those jobs require and offering those programs. We can no longer afford to simply offer everything to every student—we also can no longer afford to be institutions where students show up and find themselves. We have to be the institutions where students know whatever program they enroll in is a program that's either going to help them transfer successfully or help them get a well-paying job. To that end, we can no longer afford to offer programs that result in dead-end jobs.

Bringing this all together, it's critical that we get students the credentials and the skills they need as quickly as we can. The likelihood is that most of these folks do not have two to four years to finish their associate's degree programs. So how do we shorten that time frame for those students?

Every aspect of who we serve, what we deliver and how we deliver it needs to be reconsidered and that extends well beyond the two-year college ranks. It is a call for us in higher education to think differently and to deliver a product that is more in line with the needs of the market.

Evo: What are some of the long-term benefits of shifting to a more market-responsive model?

MS: We've become far more savvy on the business side in Louisiana due to unfortunate circumstances with state funding. We've gone from a system whose budget is 70 percent state funds and 30 percent tuition funds, and we've flipped to a 30:70 ratio the other way. Unfortunately, as state funding declines, student tuition goes up. We have become much more oriented towards the needs of the consumer because the consumer is much more important in this equation from a business perspective.

We want to ensure that that student has a really good experience because, if indeed the premise is correct, that student will return our institution because of an iterative higher education process. We need to make sure that the student has a great experience the first time at the college. This means we need to be perfect in student services, enrollment processes, financial aid all the way through to completion. We need to ensure that, upon completing, they will find a pathway to a well-paying job. Ultimately, if we do all this and deliver a great experience, they will return.

While we originally thought of the business side of higher education from an enrollment funnel perspective, we need to understand that there is so much more—it is relevant across the entire lifecycle. Students don't just look at what kind of experience they had in the enrollment process, but also they look at the results of their higher education investment. They look at whether they achieved what they were hoping to achieve. If they did, then they come back for the next credential or the next improvement in their life circumstance.

Evo: Is there anything you'd like to add about the importance of alternative credentials for todays students and almost the irrelevance of the debate around whether a degree or credential or certificate is more valuable?

MS: As a starting point, it is extraordinarily important that we continue to have this discussion beyond the limited context of institutions and our academic credentials. Instead, we need to talk about these issues in the context of the individual who's trying to improve their life circumstance. If we can start looking at major higher education issues from the perspective of our students and their aspirations—as well as from the perspective of our industry partners—we as higher education leaders will be better served.

Secondly, this is not an easy set of changes for us to make in higher education. By no means am I suggesting that Louisiana colleges and universities, or community colleges in general, have figured this out in large numbers. In fact—because of the financial strain that our institutions have been placed under here in Louisiana, and because of the extraordinary job demands that exist in some markets in Louisiana—we have been placed in what I really think of as a bit of a compression circumstance. That is to say, compression from a financial perspective and compression from a workforce demand perspective, which has caused us to have to think differently about some of these core issues. It has been painful at times, but we've benefitted from this change in perspective and the way forward for us in higher education is to embrace the change.

Oftentimes we talk about higher education as being a source of innovation and change for society. The most important innovation and change that higher education can embrace in the next decade is to begin to think of our institutions not as institutions that lag in change but as institutions that lead in change. Now there's a stark difference between the change of an organization versus the innovation in science and technology that we've driven, but we have got to focus on the changes that institutions need to be making.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

GLOBAL LEARNING

International Non-Degree Students: An Audience to Consider

GERALDINE DE BERLY
VICE PROVOST OF CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

At many universities, there are discussions happening debating the elimination of the distinctions between international and domestic students. After all, all newly arriving students on campus need orientation to understand the various resources available on campus (academic, mental, financial, physical, spiritual), the course selection and registration process, and the health protocols. For all younger students, institutions work with residence life and student affairs to assist students in the adjustment to living away from home. Institutions inculcate their values (e.g., social justice, appreciation of diversity, tolerance for differences, respect for ideas, intellectual and academic integrity, creation and dissemination of knowledge) through the curricula, extra-curricular programming and through their hiring practices.

So why treat international students differently given all the similarities in needs? Are international students a special population? One could argue that universities regularly provide services for groups that have been identified as special populations based upon ethnic identity, sexual orientation and/or disabilities. Student organizations sponsored by the institutions are formed based on special interests or themes such as advocacy, governance, media, culture, religion, service, arts, entertainment, entrepreneurship, science, technology, etc.

However, in addition to the application process, which all students must go through (transcripts, recommendations, standardized test scores), international students require visas, financial documents and passports. Universities bringing international students to campuses—whether they are degree seeking or not—should assume the same responsibility for their welfare as they do for domestic students. Additionally, to meet immigration requirements, institutions must also ensure adherence to attendance regulations, academic progress and record current addresses. For institutions with large numbers of international students, these require considerable effort to monitor. Institutions, therefore, provide their international students with orientation materials—delivered face-to-face, online, through webinars, videos or even print—so that international students know their rights and responsibilities.

At a large comprehensive institution, it is common to see the student affairs office provide a wide array of support services to include academic support (e.g. tutoring), health and wellness (counseling, medical, alcohol and drug referral, recreation, crisis assistance, health promotion (e.g., sexual misconduct and relationship violence prevention, substance abuse, mental and emotional health, spiritual support), LGBT advocacy, multicultural

affairs promoting academics and retention of underrepresented racial/ethnic students, disability services, career services, student activities, and clubs including sororities and fraternities.

The "location" of international education varies widely by campus. Depending upon the institution, international students and scholar services can be housed in student affairs, academic affairs or continuing education, or as an entirely separate entity. Where international services is housed can affect how incoming non-degree international students are managed. Whether they are long or short-term students, they need assistance to steer through the institutional systems including registration, state inoculation requirements, health insurance, housing and meals. However, if no office is assigned responsibility for the non-degree students, they can easily find themselves adrift from unit to unit with little recourse or assistance. This is short-sighted as the non-degree student experience can also form a basis for future recruitment and marketing.

International non-degree seeking students who come to campus are held to the same immigration regulations as long their primary purpose is to study in the USA. Indeed many institutions offering summer sessions have directed their marketing and recruitment efforts towards the international market. Since institutions have capacity in summer for housing and classrooms, they are able to offer specialized academic and professional programs for targeted markets. It is incumbent upon institutions to provide the necessary support services to those students as their experiences positive or negative can easily become social media content. Institutions are competing for students on a global scale. The demographic shifts that US and Canadian institutions as well as institutions in Australia, China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and in Western European countries are experiencing have caused these universities to more aggressively recruit international students for degree and non-degree programs. Of note is the proliferation of programs being delivered in English in non-native English speaking countries. Receiving a top-tiered education in English is no longer the domain of English speaking countries. Consequently, those institutions must provide the necessary services to these students if they wish to succeed.

Institutions need to ensure that all students—but particularly international students—are well served when they arrive on campuses. While degree-seeking students are generally embraced by their academic department, non-degree students are often seen as peripheral. This is particularly true when they arrive as "one-off students" rather than a cohort for a special program (for example as part of an exchange). They may take courses in several areas and thereby never establish an affiliation with one department.

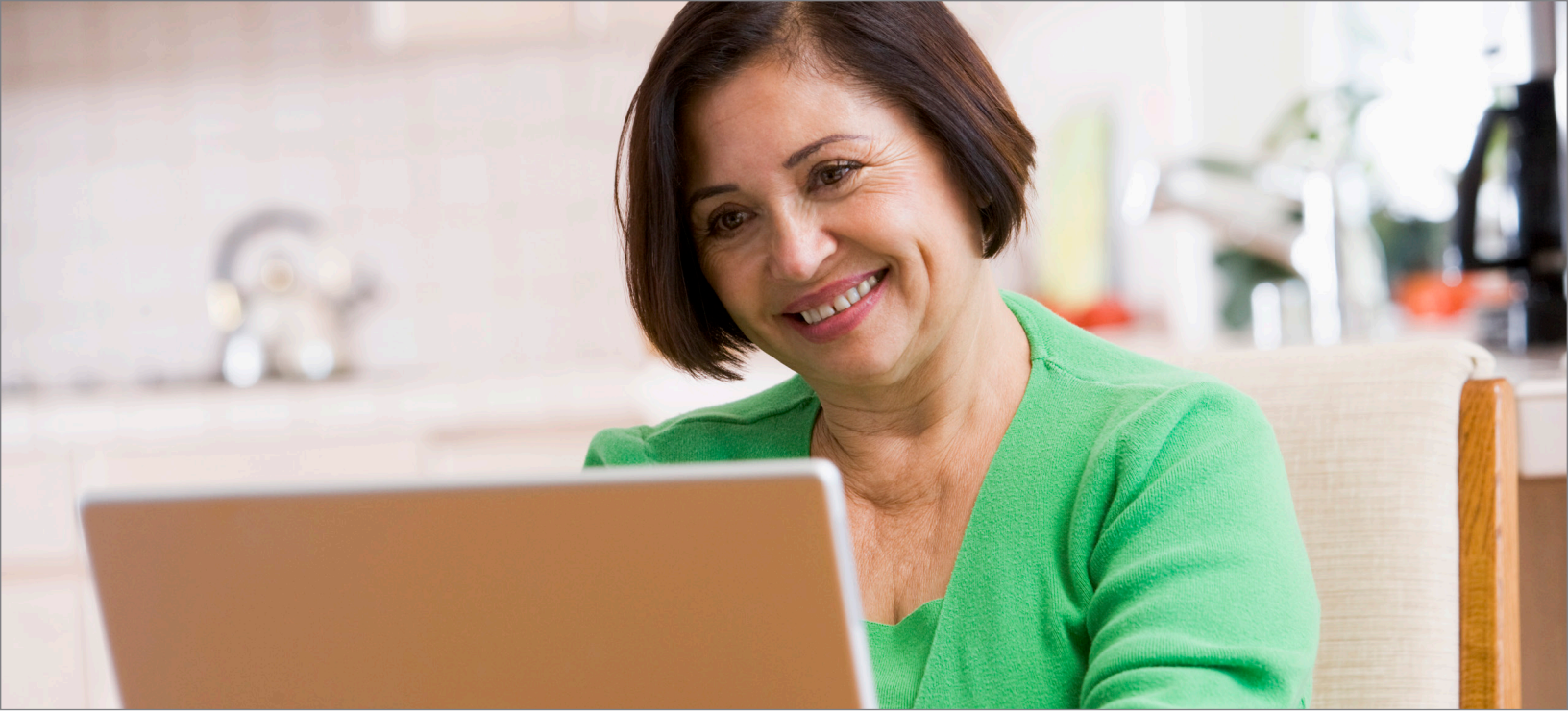
Administration should identify an office or a person to manage such students and provide them with the necessary institutional navigation assistance so that the students feel welcomed, appreciated and valued. The person or office assigned to this task will need to have excellent relations across campus with the academic departments (in order to find courses and seats), with housing and meals staff (to accommodate any special dietary or privacy needs), with campus transport as needed, with counseling services (should a crisis warrant), with disability services (if required), with student affairs (for support services) and with the international office if separate (to ensure documents are in order and cultural orientation is provided).

Those students who have an excellent campus experience may well return to the host institution for further studies including degree work. Additionally, one cannot emphasize sufficiently the impact that word of mouth (these days on social media) can have. Students readily communicate their opinions both positive and negative through these channels that are powerful marketing tools. When students have had excellent experiences and are sending messages to their networks, institutions can only benefit from these unsolicited testimonials providing free publicity and touching individuals it normally might not be able to reach. The power of a personal recommendation, albeit anecdotal, should not be discounted.

Consequently, it behooves higher education administrators to pay attention to the non-degree students by ensuring that both its administrative and academic personnel are prepared to address their issues and concerns in a coherent and well-structured fashion.

Chapter 3

Transforming Institutional Management



CUSTOMER SERVICE

How Process Automation Can Transform the Non-Traditional Student Experience

CAROLYN YOUNG
DIRECTOR OF CONTINUING STUDIES, WESTERN UNIVERSITY

There's a lot of talk about the need to serve non-traditional students, but that is a massive and diverse segment of learners. Ranging from recent graduates to working professionals to end-of-career individuals, from the highly educated to those seeking a first certificate, the non-traditional student population is anything but homogenous. However, one thing that's certain is institutions need to craft a spectacular student and customer experience for these learners in order to attract and retain them. In this interview, Carolyn Young shares her thoughts on the importance of leveraging administrative technologies and reflects on how WCS has transformed the experience for their students at the same time.

The EvoLLLution (Evo): Typically, what are some of the most significant challenges staff face when delivering a high-quality enrollment experience to students?

Carolyn Young (CY): There are a couple of challenges staff face when delivering a high-quality enrollment experience to students that I can identify. First and foremost for us is the complexity of adult learners. They come to your site looking for courses and have a huge range and diversity of experiences in using systems to enroll in learning offerings.

For example, at Western Continuing Studies, our students range from millennials to retired boomers. They don't necessarily come from one specific age group. We find that students who are very sophisticated in their technology use are very comfortable with that tech-enhanced customer experience. Then we have others who hardly even use the internet and have real fear around submitting information online.

That complexity and range of experiences and demands, and being able to adjust to the diversity of adult learner expectations, presents a challenge.

Evo: Why is the pre-enrollment and the enrollment experience so important for students?

CY: It comes down to the fact that, for adult learners, their time is precious and they have so many options for their learning.

When they make the commitment to learning and they begin using a system that is highly functional and user-friendly, their confidence in what they're doing grows—it's built on that experience and confirms that they made the best choice. In terms of registration, adult students have high standards and expectations around that relationship and process. Western University has a very good reputation across Ontario and across Canada, so students expect high standards at every level of their experience.

Many students now do their banking online, they shop online and they book really complicated trips online. Their experience with these tasks is generally very efficient and smooth—they accomplish what they set out to accomplish quickly and easily. Adult learners expect that same level of service, ease and speed when they're enrolling in our courses. As such, we include a real-time response capability. We give enrollees confidence in our security and their ability to make payments online. We create an enrollment experience where they feel that they're being recognized as an individual.

It comes down to the fact that, for adult learners, their time is precious and they have so many options for their learning.

Evo: To your mind, what are the characteristics of a leading customer experience for enrolling students?

CY: Some things are obvious, but for some schools, when you go to the website you never know what you're going to get.

First of all, is the information on the site up to date, especially regarding course enrollments? If you go to a website and go through the process of enrolling in a course that's either full or no longer available, but you don't find out until you are almost finished the process of registering, that is clearly detrimental to a customer experience.

Being able to give timely responses to students who have questions—whether they want to know about logging in or about the variety of programs we're offering—is essential. To that end, one of the things we've noticed with our current system is a significant reduction in the number of phone calls from students who don't understand how to use the system or can't figure out how to enroll in courses. As I mentioned in an earlier piece, we used to do quite a high percentage of manual enrollments but, since implementing our new system that number has gone down to less than 10 percent.

At Western Continuing Studies we have a great diversity of programs and courses—including professional development offerings, diploma programs, French immersion and corporate learning partnerships—and for the most part we're seeing that self-serve functionality and real-time responsiveness is important to any student progressing from researching their options and viewing courses to actually enrolling. It's about recognizing the diversity of adult learners' needs and being able to meet their expectations and needs, whether they are very comfortable with an online customer experience or whether they need more personalized attention and support.

Evo: How does process automation help to overcome some of the obstacles staff face?

CY: The automation processes we have in place improve the accuracy of the information that students receive, and the efficiency in getting that information to them.

One of the issues with manual processes was the constant risk of human error. Something as simple as giving the wrong student space in a course that was full or sending out the wrong information to a student who wanted to be notified when a course was open for registration significantly and negatively impacts the customer experience.

We have numerous processes that have been automated since we started using Destiny Solutions' Destiny One, but the two that I think we find extremely beneficial are open course notifications and waitlist notifications because they require no work on our part. The open course notification feature allows a student to a request to be sent a notification when a course they're interested in opens for enrollment. When that course opens for registration, an email automatically goes out to the student prompting them to enroll. No one here on the team has to go look at a list and send out an email—we no longer have to go through that manual process. The other functionality we find extremely beneficial is the waitlist notification feature. If a course is full and students have added their name to a waitlist, as soon as there's a cancellation or someone transfers to another course, a message goes to the students at the top of the waitlist—who have been waiting the longest—giving them the opportunity to enroll first

for that empty spot. Those are just two examples where I have found process automation to really help our staff.

Our Corporate Learning portal, also through Destiny Solutions, has been really helpful in allowing us to automate employees' enrollments in our courses. What's more, companies can be set up to have an administrator batch-add employees who can take courses and identify what courses they can register for. That's been a huge time saver.

Evo: What are some of the biggest changes and biggest benefits that staff are seeing in the way they're able to use their time with process automation in place?

CY: When I think about our staff who work directly with the students, especially those who were and are directly involved with registration processes, one of the best things that have come out of automation is their ability to focus on more high-value concerns. The students don't contact us anymore about losing their ID numbers. They don't contact us because they're looking for a course that they can't find in our system.

Now, our staff are able to spend time helping students make the right choices. There's been a change where staff are more able to give advice and help students understand their options, outcomes and possible career directions. Ultimately, the students benefit because they're getting a much better idea about what they want to do with their education. This new role has made a big and positive change for staff as well. It changes the nature of their conversations with students and it helps students feel really confident about their decisions because they have that opportunity to connect with our staff and review their choices.

Evo: We've discussed the value of greater process automation in the CE space. How should main campuses be looking to improve automation as well?

CY: Definitely—traditional institutions should be looking to improve process automation. Because our system responds so quickly to students, we've noticed that some of the faculties at Western are exploring partnerships with us because they know that the length of time that the institutional system needs to set students up is probably causing them to lose some of the alternative programming opportunities that are out there. They're working with us so they can house their courses in our system, because the systems that they use for traditional programming won't meet their needs.

Evo: What are some of the distinct advantages to forming more of those kinds of intra-institutional partnerships?

CY: These partnerships give our students such vast choices for learning. Through these relationships with extremely well respected faculties, people who are not considered "full" students at Western can now take courses that are taught by highly qualified instructors and experts from one of Canada's top institutions. It really broadens students' choices.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

APPLIED AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Navigating the CBE Frontier: Creative and Alternative Student Support for Creative and Alternative Models of Education

AARON BROWER
PROVOST, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION

DAVID SCHEJBAL
DEAN OF CONTINUING EDUCATION, OUTREACH AND E-LEARNING,
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION

As has been stated in many venues (including in *The EvoLLLution*), we simply need more alternative pathways to meet the nation's demand for people with postsecondary degrees.

Reaching the President's goal for 60 percent of the nation's citizens to be college educated by 2025 will require almost 64 million *more* people with postsecondary degrees in the United States, an increase of 20 percent from where we are now. In Wisconsin alone, where we (the authors) live and work, this 20-percent increase (about 39 percent of Wisconsin residents currently have college degrees) will require 1.2 million more people to receive degrees by 2025. Yet, in Wisconsin, only about 350,000 "seats" are available each year across all Wisconsin's public, private, and technical colleges. Given that Wisconsin's average six-year graduation rate is less than 50 percent, we simply cannot graduate 1.2 million more people by 2025 using the seats available in current traditional education. A similar picture exists across the nation.

Competency-based education (CBE) has emerged as one response to educate more people, using flexible methods, while maintaining high quality.[1] CBE puts student learning front and center, with progress towards a degree measured through students' demonstration of their mastery of the skills, knowledge and abilities required to earn their degrees. Arguably, the "purest" and most flexible version of CBE is *direct-assessment* CBE, where programs are not tied to credits, semesters or courses. Instead, programs are entirely structured around a series of competency assessments—projects, papers, exams, or other ways to directly

evaluate specific learning outcomes—that students complete. Students must complete each competency assessment—and at a pre-determined mastery level—to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the full complement of skills, knowledge and abilities required for their degrees. Direct-assessment CBE is particularly well suited to adult learners who wish to fit their education around their lives and work.

Direct-assessment CBE makes use of a stratified approach to provide education, support and services to students. It is not a surprise that students require many types of supports in order to succeed. Just looking at the student support side alone, "these services include, but are not limited to, academic tutorial programs, faculty and peer mentoring programs, academic and career advising, and social and personal adjustment initiatives."[2]

CBE puts student learning front and center, with progress towards a degree measured through students' demonstration of their mastery of the skills, knowledge and abilities required to earn their degrees.

No one person should be expected to provide education and support in all areas, let alone be expert in them all. Yet, this is exactly what we assume from faculty, particularly in a traditional image of how education is delivered by college and university faculty.[3] Despite the fact that student affairs and advising has become professionalized and split off from the "real" educational work of faculty, what stubbornly remains is a notion that students only learn when they are in the direct presence of faculty. The image of faculty working with students formally in the classroom and providing mentoring and advice informally at "teas" or in local coffee shops remains emblematic of this traditional faculty-centric view of college life.[4] Research shows, of course, that students have agency over their own learning, interacting with an environment structured to facilitate their learning, with direct faculty interaction playing an important role, but only one role within this richer environment.[5] As we will describe later, federal regulation and regional accreditation remains mired in the faculty-centric view of how students learn. And the real problem with this is that this regulatory straightjacket presents major roadblocks in the nation's ability to provide high-quality innovative education.

In contrast, think about healthcare, a field that has embraced a stratified service model. When we seek health care, patients are referred to doctors for specific ailments, while routine patient contacts, diagnostics, and evaluations are performed by clerical and technical staff. The education equivalent of the healthcare team would consists of faculty or tutors who address students' academic needs, while routine progress checks and regular contact with students is performed by student coaches, and financial aid, registration and related issues are addressed by staff with expertise in those areas.

We use this stratified education-and-support approach in the University of Wisconsin Flexible Option, the suite of direct-assessment CBE programs that we have developed within and across the UW System. In UW Flex, students register for three-month subscription periods during which they complete as much academic work as they like without being confined to quarter or semester structures. This works well for adult students who have experience to bring to their studies and who have work and family schedules that require flexibility. To ensure that students are making progress and succeeding, each student is assigned an Academic Success Coach (ASC) who connects with the student on a weekly basis and helps address most of the student's concerns—in areas as diverse as traditional advising, to mentoring, to life coaching, to student support, and even in some aspects, low-level tutoring. Each ASC supports about 85 students, allowing the coach the time and energy to devote to proactive engagement with their students. In this way, our ASCs provide the kind of wraparound and proactive advising that is recommended as a best practice for the type of student that UW Flex attracts.[6] When the student has needs beyond the ASC's expertise, such as academic content questions or detailed help with financial aid, the ASC connects the student to faculty or financial aid experts or others who can best address those needs.

Regulatory Challenges of this Model

The stratified education-and-support model that we use in the UW Flexible Option is a very effective approach to higher education, especially for the adult student. Unfortunately, there are regulatory obstacles that make executing this model very difficult.

The most vexing challenge has to do with how the regulatory environment defines who "counts" as faculty and what "counts" as an interaction between faculty and students.

The U.S. Department of Education requires that students in competency-based programs have "regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors."[7] Any program "that does not include regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors is considered to be a correspondence

program with the significant limitations and restrictions on Title IV eligibility that apply to such programs."[8] Students in programs that are not eligible for Title IV funds are not eligible to receive federal financial aid. Nearly all degree programs must have access to Title IV funds to reach the students that need education most.

According to the Department of Education, here's who "counts" as a faculty member eligible to provide education:

> *Qualified faculty members are identified primarily by credentials, but other factors, including but not limited to equivalent experience, may be considered by the institution in determining whether a faculty member is qualified. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established.[9]*

Further, here's what "counts" as educational interaction according to the Department of Education:

> *[It does] not consider interaction that is wholly optional or initiated primarily by the student to be regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors. Interaction that occurs only upon the request of the student (either electronically or otherwise) would not be considered regular and substantive interaction.[10]*

The Department recognizes that some institutions use stratified educational models, but in those cases, to satisfy the regular and substantive requirement, an institution must ensure that the individuals who initiate contact with students meet the faculty standards above:

> *In applying such a model, an institution must ensure that the interaction is provided by institutional staff who meet accrediting agency standards for providing instruction in the subject matter being discussed, that the interaction is regular, and that the amount of faculty resources dedicated to the program is sufficient in the judgment of the accrediting agency. Interactions between a student and personnel who do not meet accrediting agency standards for providing instruction in the subject area would not be considered substantive interaction with an instructor.[11]*

Simply put, a stratified-education-and-support model is fine for the U.S. Department of Education, but the only contact between students and faculty that counts to meet their requirements is contact that initiated by an employee who qualifies as "faculty" based on their standards. Even though an ASC in an undergraduate business program who has a master's degree in counseling contacts a student weekly to evaluate the student's progress, connects the student to additional resources such as faculty or tutoring—even if under the guidance of qualifying faculty—the ASC does not count as faculty and thus that interaction does not satisfy the regular and substantive requirement. Furthermore, whenever a student contacts a faculty member, this also does not count as regular and substantive interaction.

Thus, unlike the range of qualified healthcare professionals who routinely provide insurance-funded care to patients, in higher education only faculty can provide fundable support to students, and only when they initiate contact with students. Imagine if the only reimbursable healthcare expenses were those where the doctor contacts the patient. Such a requirement would completely alter the model of healthcare, and would neither improve patient outcomes nor manage costs.

Fixing the regulations is not simple, but it is straightforward. It requires writing regulations that allow qualified regular-and-substantive interactions to take place within a highly structured *educational environment* composed of readily accessible and high-quality learning materials and experiences, and in interaction with the range of readily accessible and high-quality people with whom students learn (including faculty, but also coaches, advisors, and yes, even other students). The structured educational environment includes the evaluation of student learning through a range of high-quality assessments that best assess the skills, knowledge, and abilities that we need students to learn. The focus should be on outcomes, and if regulation is needed, that is where it should be focused.

We encourage legislators to engage higher education to draft legislation that supports learning outcomes while minimizing fraud and abuse of taxpayer funds. Real political will is needed to get this done.

We understand that the regulatory requirements are in place to protect consumers (students and tax payers). At the same time, we must find a way to be released from the regulatory straightjacket that prevents us from reaching our goal to graduate more people with postsecondary degrees. Institutions across the country are innovating to provide high-quality education in cost-effective ways. If the only kind of contact that counts to satisfy regulatory requirements is contact between students and faculty that is initiated by the faculty, and if the only educators who count are narrowly defined faculty, then it is highly unlikely that education can scale to meet the needs of the nation in cost-effective ways

that do not compromise quality.

If we are going to have even a fighting chance to educate the number of citizens who need higher education, we need a new set of regulations that promote the type of high-quality and flexible programs that the nation needs. The regulatory focus, first and foremost, should be on student success, student learning, and good learning outcomes. Are students learning in a program? Can they apply what they learn to the world around them? And is a program providing a coherent learning environment for students that fosters learning? These should be the foundations upon which regulations—and quality education—are built.

References and Footnotes

[1] Robert Kelchen, "The Landscape of Competency-Based Education," Center on Higher Education Reform at the American Entperirse Institute. Accessed at https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/competency-based-education-landscape.pdf

[2] Brian K. Bridges, "Student Support Services: A Practice Brief Based On Beams Project Outcomes." Accessed at http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/beams_student_support_services.pdf

[3] Horowitz, H.L. (1987). *Campus Life*. New York: Academic Press.

[4] *Ibid*

[5] Mayhew, M.J., Rockenbach, A.N., Bowman, N.A., Seifert, T.A.D., Wolniak, G.C., Pascarella, E.T., Terenzini, P.T. *How College Affects Students: 21st Century Evidence that Higher Education Works*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016.

[6] See: NACADA. Proactive (instrusive) advising resource links. Clearinghouse Academic Advising Resources. Accessible at http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Proactive-(intrusive)-advising-resource-links.aspx

[7] U.S. Department of Education. "Dear Colleague Letter." GEN-14-23. Dec. 19, 2014. https://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN1423.html

[8] *Ibid*

[9] Higher Learning Commission. "Determining Qualified Faculty Through HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices: Guidelines for Institutions and Peer Reviewers." B.2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications. http://download.hlcommission.org/FacultyGuidelines_2016_OPB.pdf

[10] U.S. Department of Education. "Dear Colleague Letter." GEN-14-23. Dec. 19, 2014. https://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN1423.html

[11] *Ibid*

OPERATIONS AND EFFICIENCY

The University is a System

CHAOUKI ABDALLAH
PROVOST, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

GREG HEILEMAN
ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR CURRICULUM, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

TERRY BABBITT
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT,
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Universities are often treated as independent and autonomous entities. After all, it is much simpler to attribute their success or failure in fulfilling their mission—whatever that might be—to their independent actions. Not unlike the view that firms fail or succeed because of their leaders' weaknesses or foresight, universities are often evaluated by their ability to graduate students on time (using the graduation rate metric) and their reputational scores, and institutions often link these outputs directly to their leaders, faculty actions and intent.

This view is at best incomplete and in most cases incorrect.

Each university is a system that takes in high school graduates (at least for its undergraduate portion) for input and, through a regulated and complicated process, produces its own graduates four, five or six years later. Just like any dynamic system, its output depends both on its input as well as its own initial conditions and internal dynamics. In the parlance of dynamic systems, these are called the natural and forced responses. For linear systems, one can actually decompose the output into the sum of two terms: one due to the input (the forced response), and one due to the system itself (the natural response). Such decomposition is not generally possible for nonlinear systems but the general argument remains valid. This proposition can be easily verified using the data currently available for many universities.

At my own university, using the data collected over multiple years on our incoming students' characteristics (e.g. High School GPA, ACT score, etc.), I can easily verify that increasing the selectivity of applicants will allow us to adjust the graduation rate to any desired level (Heileman 2015). Of course, the price paid is limiting access by reducing the number of admitted students. This will come as no surprise to most, but the point of the exercise is to show that the university can achieve almost any desired output (e.g. graduation rate) if the input is properly selected. The more useful conclusion is to show that adjustments to the university

process itself, while maintaining the same input characteristics, leads to improved outcomes. This also can be proved using our data, where a curriculum is streamlined, advising is optimized, and the interventions are matched to the students' characteristics. In fact, for similar students' characteristics, one can demonstrate much better graduation rates from two universities, depending on their internal characteristics. Better yet, one need only examine the performance of student athletes versus the general student population at any large public flagship university. The two groups share in their academic characteristics, but proceed along different paths; student athletes, while juggling their academic and athletic duties, are provided with more academic support and thus graduate at higher rates.

So what is the point of considering the university as a dynamic system? It is to highlight that the output is dependent on the interplay between the input and the internal dynamics. Highly selective colleges filter out students—affecting the output portion due to the external inputs— while effective universities are adapting their own characteristics to affect the output portion due to their internal dynamics. The two knobs need to be concurrently adjusted.

However, the above discussion misses one important aspect: simply focusing on the easy-to-measure-and-manipulate graduation rate is both shortsighted and limiting. In fact, the value-added by any university should be measured by the learning that takes place within its boundaries, and the ability of its graduates to perform in their chosen fields. "Learning"—a student's learning experience and their academic results—is again affected by the interplay between the input characteristics (an academically better-prepared student will take better advantage of a university's learning experience) and the university's internal dynamics (a more challenging curriculum, academic support). The one caveat is that measuring learning remains elusive at least in a predictive manner. In other words, it is difficult to predict that a certain graduate of a specific school will eventually perform at a pre-specified level. One must rely on delayed measurements (alumni and employers' surveys) to determine the effectiveness of specific interventions and curricula. Recent approaches (CLA+, Purdue-Gallup index, OECD, etc.) are attempts to measure what we truly value.

The same conceptual framework may be interpreted differently by reversing the roles of the student and the university: a student is a system with its own initial conditions, while the university experience provides the inputs needed to achieve a desired outcome. Thus again, the graduation rates, the learning outcomes, etc. become the combined outputs resulting from the interplay between the student's initial conditions and the university's interventions.

This discussion is not meant to provide a mathematical description of the dynamics of learning, but only to illustrate that focusing our attention (or ire!) within the university's boundaries misses the big picture. On the other hand, attempting to improve naïve measures, such as graduation rates, leads to the perverse incentives of filtering out a large number of incoming students and decreasing the number of eventual college graduates. Only by focusing on the input and the dynamics concurrently can we achieve the ultimate goal of improving the quality and quantity of the universities' outputs.

References

Heileman, G.L., Babbitt, T.H., & Abdallah, C. T. (2015). Visualizing student flows: Busting myths about student movement and success. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, Vol. 47, No. 3, (May/June 2015). 30–39.

TECH TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The Scale of Change in Higher Education: Using Technology and Impacting Student Success

TIMOTHY RENICK
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS AND UNIVERSITY VICE PROVOST, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In December, I spoke at a statewide meeting of more than a hundred university and college leaders in New Mexico. After outlining some of the initiatives that we have implemented at Georgia State University to raise our graduation rates by 22 percentage points, I received an interesting comment.

The president of a small college with enrollments under 2,000 lamented, "Sure, you can implement these programs at a big university like Georgia State, but how can small colleges do the same?"

How times have changed. When I assumed the position of head of student success programs at Georgia State eight years ago, the conversation was very different. Georgia State's graduation rates were far too low, and there were significant achievement gaps between students based on race, ethnicity and income level. In short, we were a typical, large public university.

It's not that we didn't know what would help us to improve. Georgia State enrolls large numbers of students who come from populations that typically struggle in college. Among our 51,000 students, 63 percent are non-white and 60 percent are Pell eligible. Our student body is among the most diverse in the nation—and one of the most economically challenged. Thousands of our students are the first in their families to attend college. In order to increase graduation rates, we knew that we needed to provide students with far more personalized assistance. We needed to be able to give them individualized academic advice in a timely fashion, to determine whether they had registered for classes and majors that were appropriate to their abilities, to identify when they were struggling in their classes before their grades faltered, to help them complete the stack of paperwork needed to qualify for financial aid and scholarships, and to provide them with financial counseling about how to spend the money wisely once they had it.

We knew what we needed to do. We just didn't know how to do it.

Quite simply, the problem was one of scale. Eight years ago, we

looked around us at colleges and universities that were able to provide the kind of personalized attention that our students needed. For the most part, they fell into two categories. They were either elite, well-resourced universities with large endowments and low student to faculty/staff ratios—Harvard, Virginia, UC Berkeley—or they were small colleges with modest enrollments. Georgia State was neither. When it came to personalized attention, there seemed to be only one solution: staff up. This model was achievable for well-resourced institutions and for those that enrolled a couple of thousand students or less. But what do institutions do that enroll tens of thousands of students? What is the path forward for places like Georgia State?

In recent years, Georgia State University—along with a handful of other large, non-elite, public universities such as Arizona State and Central Florida—has had to invent one. We have worked to develop a model of postsecondary education that is highly personalized *and* offered at scale. And we have worked to spread the new models developed through collaborations like the University Innovation Alliance. What is emerging is exciting—not merely for our own campuses but for the nation.

What is emerging is exciting—not merely for our own campuses but for the nation.

At Georgia State, for instance, we conducted an assessment of the state of academic advising on our campus six years ago. The results were sobering. With tens of thousands of at-risk students, advisors were overwhelmed. Too many students were struggling—dropping and failing courses, pursuing the wrong majors relative to their background and ability, or simply registering for courses that did not apply to their degree programs. Even worse, because our advisors were overwhelmed, their workdays were filled just by meeting with students who came to them. This does not sound like a bad thing: help the students who have the initiative to seek help. But low-income, first-generation students often lack the context to self-diagnose when they are struggling. Since no one at the university was watching, thousands were failing courses, losing scholarships and dropping out before an advisor could even reach out to help. We not only knew that we had to do better, but that we had to do something *very different*.

With no solution for the problem at hand, we collaborated with the Education Advisory Board (EAB) to invent one. Using ten years of Georgia State data—over two million grades—we identified academic behaviors that correlated to students struggling in the past. For instance, we found that Political Science majors who earn an A or B in their first Political Science course at Georgia State go on to graduate on time at a 75 percent rate. Political Science majors who get a C in their first course graduate at only a 25-percent rate. Yet for years, we had been doing nothing with the C student but passing him or her on to upper-level work in the field, where whatever weakness resulted in that first C grade would become exacerbated, and the C grade would become Ds and Fs. We asked a simple question: What would happen if we intervened when the problem first surfaced rather than after it had spread? How many more students could we help to graduate?

The result was a new type of data-based advising platform that identifies more than 800 problems like the one outlined above. Now, every day the system searches all of our student-information systems for evidence of any of these 800 things. Did a student register for the wrong course? Did they do poorly in a prerequisite course? Are they in a major that does not fit their ability? When an alert goes off, an advisor proactively reaches out to the student, typically within 48 hours. Over the past twelve months at Georgia State, *we have had more than 43,000 one-on-one meetings with students that were initiated by advisors based on personalized alerts emerging from this new advising platform*. Offered as the Student Success Collaborative by EAB, there are now more than 150 universities nationally using the same advising platform customized to their own campus data, and literally hundreds of thousands of students in the U.S.—most at large public universities—are now getting timely, personalized attention *at scale*.

Georgia State has used this same pairing of technology/data and human interaction in half a dozen other new student-success initiatives. We use big data to help us target micro-grants to maximize the impact of need-based aid. Our Panther Retention Grant program, which has been recognized by President Obama, has helped prevent more than 7,000 Georgia State students from dropping out for financial reasons over the past four years—with an average grant of only $900 each. We have used flipped classrooms with adaptive learning to transform outcomes in all of our introductory math courses. Six years ago—under a non-personalized, lecture-class format—43 percent of the students taking college math were getting non-passing grades. Now, students meet in groups with their instructors in a math lab, with each student at their own computer terminal working on math problems and receiving immediate, personalized feedback in response to their answers. Slower students automatically get additional exercises on a point so they can build up competency before moving on. More advanced students get more challenging questions so they do not get bored and tune out. Without lowering

academic rigor or expectations, we have lowered the non-pass rate in these math courses from 43 percent to 19 percent—and we have scaled the program to cover all 7,500 students who take these courses annually.

Why are these innovations so important, not just to Georgia State but also to the nation? They are transformative. Georgia State has increased its graduation rates by 22 percent at the same time that we have doubled the number of low-income, first-generation students that we enroll. Even more encouragingly, we have evened the playing field between different student populations. This year at Georgia State, our first-generation, Pell-eligible, black, and Latino students all graduated at rates at or above the rates for the student body overall—making Georgia State the only public university of its size nationally that has eliminated the achievement gap. All told, we are graduating 1,800 more students than were just five years ago—with the biggest gains being made by our most at-risk student populations. Plus, our revenues have reached new heights as a result of the tuition dollars that we have gained from holding on to students who in the past would have dropped out.

The question used to be: "How can large, public universities afford to offer personalized attention to students at scale?" The question today is: "How can they afford *not* to do so?"

Chapter 4

Keeping Up with the Changes

HIGHER ED AS A BUSINESS

Surveying the Competitive Landscape for Independent Colleges

RICHARD EKMAN
PRESIDENT, COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

The present and future of small, independent colleges have dominated the higher education press since well before the recession in 2008, with many analysts and leaders alike predicting the end of an entire sector of institutions. The truth of the matter, however, is a lot less dire. In this interview, Richard Ekman reflects on the challenges and opportunities facing smaller, independent colleges and shares his thoughts on the future role for these institutions in the rich postsecondary ecosystem.

The EvoLLLution (Evo): How have changing market conditions impacted smaller, independent colleges and universities?

Richard Ekman (RE): Let's identify some of the trends that are out there that do affect these colleges. First are the demographic changes. We're not seeing the surging number of traditional college-age students—and the increases that we do see in this demographic are concentrated in the Southeastern and Southwestern United States, and they're disproportionately in lower-income families. These are often first-generation college-goers, often immigrants themselves or children of immigrants.

The nature of today's college-going public is *very* different from the traditional market even ten to 15 years ago, and smaller independent colleges that have focused primarily on the transformational role of undergraduate education for traditional-age undergraduates are adapting to this change.

Changing demographics is just one factor. There also have been changes in the costs of running an institution. Over time, the costs of fuel and benefits—both of which make up significant portions of the total operating budget for colleges and universities—have gone up significantly. This affects the ability of colleges to maintain a financial equilibrium.

Evo: Are smaller independent institutions more susceptible to these changes than larger public and private universities?

RE: Scale is an issue; "small" is not as good as "big" when it comes to coping with these changes. Until recently, I would have said the public universities have guaranteed subsidies of their operations which is an advantage for them, cushioning them from the ups and downs of actual costs. Lately, however, as state governments have been so starved they've taken some precipitous actions that make money less available for the public universities and also

make the situation volatile because these are political decisions, not planning decisions.

These factors affect both public and private institutions. No one is immune.

Evo: What are a few strategies small, independent colleges and universities have (and can) put into place to adapt to these changing market conditions?

RE: There's been a lot of innovation in the last ten years aimed at gaining cost efficiencies and increasing revenues. The cost savings include some obvious things such as trimming staff where that's possible, doing purchasing through consortia of institutions, looking at fuel efficiency, and changing the calendar so you get greater and more efficient use out of the physical plant. These efforts have been sustained. For the small private colleges, the trimming has gone about as far as it can before cutting into the meat, not the fat.

When it comes to generating revenue, however, those efforts are just beginning to really pay off. Many small, strictly undergraduate, strictly liberal arts institutions have added units that exist in parallel to the traditional college and that depart from the traditional focus of the institution. The unit might offer a master's program for working adults on a part-time basis in the evening in professional fields such as business, education, or health. It might be in an online degree-completion program for people who aren't located nearby and have some college credit. Mary Baldwin College in Virginia is a great example of this. MBC is a traditional women's college that has all the challenges that women's colleges have had to navigate in recent years. MBC created a health sciences college and tapped an entirely new market, which made all the difference in the world in balancing the budget. Utica College in upstate New York offered satellite programs, first in Syracuse and now all over the world. These operate mostly online and have become very good sources of revenue for them.

Some colleges have taken advantage of unique circumstances like geography. The Cincinnati Bengals NFL team, for example, used to hold their training camp on the campus of Georgetown College in Kentucky. Some colleges have specific opportunities that they can maximize.

There are two reports that we've produced recently, both on innovation at independent colleges, available on CIC's website. These documents show how much innovation is going on both in the cost savings side and the revenue generation side. We produced these as part of a campaign that we have run for the past few years on the future of independent higher education, where we've been looking at alternative business models for independent colleges. In commissioning these reports, we've provided some ideas for our members to take into account as they have their own discussions with campus stakeholders and trustees about what choices they ought to be making for the future.

Scale is an issue; "small" is not as good as "big" when it comes to coping with these changes.

Evo: What are some of the challenges leaders of smaller institutions might face when trying to get these strategic changes off the ground?

RE: One of the big issues is the importance of a liberal arts core to these smaller institutions. People at our institutions believe that an undergraduate education ought to be more than narrow job training, but whether that means French vs. Spanish, modern history vs. ancient history, American literature vs. Chinese literature—these are all open questions and different colleges answer them differently.

There has been some movement toward de-emphasis of departments and more emphasis on thematic programs. This has resulted in some efficiencies and flexibility.

There also have been efforts to use active forms of learning more emphatically by creating more opportunities for internships, joint research projects with faculty members, and service-learning projects. These things are very feasible on the small scale of a small college and are harder to do in a giant institution.

Evo: Looking 10 years into the future, what role do you think smaller colleges and universities will play in the rich American higher education ecosystem—especially with the growing non-traditional student demographic?

RE: The one thing that is absolutely clear to me is that the journalists who report the occasional closure of a college as though it signals the beginning of the end for hundreds of colleges are simply wrong.

If you look at the history of closures, there have been about three

or four a year every year going back 30 years. There's nothing related specifically to the 2008 recession that suggests a change from the normal dynamics. Moreover, if you look at the colleges that closed—and I did this a couple of years ago—the average age of a college that closed was 119 years. In what other sector of society can you say that the average life of a firm that closes is that long? Not heavy industry, not steel and autos, not the dot-coms. It's not a reason to panic if three to four colleges close after 119 years.

The recent trend is for enrollments to favor larger public institutions and there is a small trend of increase in online learning. I don't know how far either of those is going to go because state budgets can have a significant impact on the price of tuition at public institutions as well as the number of spots for incoming students. Those circumstances change the set of options that an individual student has.

In what other sector of society can you say that the average life of a firm that closes is that long? Not heavy industry, not steel and autos, not the dot-coms. It's not a reason to panic if three to four colleges close after 119 years.

Second, the evidence about online learning is mixed as to whether students are as well educated as they are from live instruction. My impression is that online learning works better than giant lecture courses but it doesn't work as well as small, live seminars and workshops. You see evidence to this effect most dramatically in some of the gatekeeper "101" courses that move students into popular majors like psychology, accounting, or biology. These courses have enormous numbers of enrolled students and for big universities, their attrition rate is terrible. However, since they are gatekeeper courses, students will take them a second time if they don't pass the first time because they want to get on with their careers in whatever field they've chosen. In small colleges, those courses are relatively large, but large means 100 students—not 1,000 students. The evidence also shows that students in these smaller institutions do tend to complete their majors and graduate in a more timely fashion.

Price is an issue for prospective students but if you look at the amount of scholarship aid offered by private colleges, the net price for public and private institutions is about the same. Most students, particularly many first-generation students, don't understand that.

Evo: Is there anything you'd like to add about the challenges facing smaller institutions and what it's going to take for leaders to overcome them?

RE: What's different these days for independent colleges is the difficulty in predicting how these factors—the challenges and opportunities we've identified during this discussion—are going to play out. I can think of two colleges that are superficially similar in all the fundamentals but one is thriving and one is not. The difference is leadership. It's the vision that the president and the trustees have as to what the college ought to do, and the choices it ought to make, that will make all the difference.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

ACCESSIBILITY

Building Bridges Between Community Colleges and Universities

ELOY ORTIZ OAKLEY
CHANCELLOR, CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Every year the cost of a college education climbs higher, much faster than the rate of inflation. The average cost of public universities is nearly five figures a year, and families at private colleges can expect to pay three times the cost of a state school.

Of course, heading directly to a four-year university out of high school isn't the only route to earning a university degree. Community colleges are an attractive option for many students looking for a more affordability as well as quality preparation for the rigors of a university education.

Maximizing the success of our transfer students demands that two-year colleges and four-year universities nurture and maintain collaborative and effective relationships. And when we extend that collaboration to the K-12 system, we begin the positive step of seeing our institutions as one educational ecosystem focused on student success, instead of three silos focused on institutional success.

Long Beach institutions recognized this need for collaboration and relationship building in 2008, when we came together and launched the Long Beach College Promise. Over the better part of the last decade, Long Beach City College (LBCC), CSU Long Beach (CSULB), the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) and the City of Long Beach have collaborated on a variety of initiatives to improve college preparation, access and completion across our community. The vision has been to create a college-going culture amongst all the communities we serve. This comprehensive program has become a model for the nation and was used by White House education leaders to help shape the America's College Promise proposal.

The Long Beach College Promise engages students at an early age with college tours in fourth and fifth grades, and a greater focus on college preparation throughout their LBUSD experience. By the time LBCC students are prepared to transfer, the College Promise has strengthened the bridge between LBCC and CSULB. The City of Long Beach has worked to increase internships in the region, so our students and graduates can supplement their educations with real-world work experience. Each partner in the College Promise fulfills its part to provide incentives, services and support, with a seamless transition for the student.

The program offers such benefits as a tuition-free academic year at LBCC and preferred admission to CSULB. Our partner CSULB offers education and assistance, summer programs, bridge

programs and special advising to our students at LBCC.

Thanks to the Long Beach College Promise, more high school graduates are completing foundational coursework at LBCC and advancing to CSULB or other four-year colleges and universities. LBUSD students who attend LBCC and then transfer to CSULB graduate at higher rates than other transfer students entering the university.

Forging relationships between school districts, two-year colleges and four-year universities isn't easy. It calls for a focused commitment and investment of time to raise the bar of student success.

Strong relationships have to be cultivated at all levels. The institution's CEOs must create a collaborative spirit that infuses the institutions from the top down. Faculty must collaborate more effectively to build solid transfer pathways. Researchers must freely share data so that student success can be measured across time and across institutions. Each work group must take ownership of their respective roles and goals. Most importantly, each institution commits to taking responsibility—and being held accountable—for the academic success of each child in the greater Long Beach region.

Maximizing the success of our transfer students demands that two-year colleges and four-year universities nurture and maintain collaborative and effective relationships.

These relationships are critical, but are only the beginning. Measurable outcomes should be defined in a plan, and that plan should be part of a larger promise or agreement. Each group must to be willing to make the outcomes a priority.

Establishing relationships between two-year colleges and four-year universities is a long-term endeavor. Commitment to program goals, regular dialogue and shared accountability are all crucial components the Long Beach College Promise.

It takes time and effort. But it's a smart investment of resources that benefits students and local communities, because college graduates statistically earn more and contribute more to the economy. Long Beach residents have recognized this, and donated generously to help fund the Long Beach College Promise. Donations to the LBCC Foundation have enabled us to offer a full tuition-free academic year at LBCC to qualified LBUSD graduates. More than 12,000 students have received the scholarship since 2008.

Throughout California and the nation, these types of partnerships will become increasingly critical to help students meet their higher education goals and reach their full potential.

PROGRAM PLANNING AND DESIGN

Scaling Online Learning: Obstacles on the Way to the Summit

MARIE CINI
PROVOST, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

MATTHEW PRINEAS
VICE PROVOST AND DEAN OF THE UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL,
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Why Economies of Scale? Why Now?

Unlike most industries, higher education has largely failed to take advantage of economies of scale to gain efficiencies. In the U.S., a decentralized and fragmented system of thousands of institutions mitigates against large-scale adoption of best practices. Fundamentally, the history and culture of higher education present powerful obstacles to the idea of scale. As resources become more constrained, pressures on university leaders to leverage the benefits of scale will only grow.

Online education may seem to offer the promise of scale without a commensurate increase in costs. Yet by itself online education cannot disrupt the facts on the ground. Grafting new delivery platforms onto traditional approaches to teaching and learning does not enable institutions to benefit from economies of scale. In fact, online education may exacerbate inherent inefficiencies.

To deliver on the benefits of scale, fundamental changes to how universities function are required.

What Does It Mean to Apply Economies of Scale?

Applying economies of scale means that universities develop processes and systems that allow rapid, additional growth at marginal cost. Applied to online learning, this means that as new sections of a given course are added, growth of enrollment revenues will increase more quickly than any costs associated with adding additional sections.

For example, adding an additional course section of 25 students may increase revenue by x amount, but there is still a cost to adding that new section. The total cost of that hypothetical new section should include *all* costs, not limited to direct instructional costs, but also including indirect costs of student support, marketing, technology, and so on. The lower the total cost of adding that additional section, the greater the revenue that each additional section produces. But, if the total cost to add an additional section is *more* than this hypothetical x, then the institution is in the unenviable position of potentially growing itself out of existence.

Obstacles to Economies of Scale in Online Higher Education

The ways in which universities have traditionally developed and delivered the curriculum virtually guarantee that costs will grow, quickly outstripping gains in revenue. This structural obstacle is deeply rooted in the historical governance models of universities, in which faculty serve as content, learning design, and teaching approach architects. Although most higher education faculty are experts in their discipline, very few have a background in learning science, learning design or teaching effectiveness. This is not to blame the faculty. Indeed, higher education institutions are realizing the need to provide expertise and support in these critical areas.

Decentralized Course Design

In most institutions full-time faculty who teach online determine the design of the course and select the course materials. When this model is transferred to online education—allowing each section of a course to have varying learning outcomes, textbooks and materials, and a unique faculty-specific approach to learning—total costs will increase rather than decrease for the institution.

For example, the personnel costs of having a textbook services team order 6 different textbooks for different sections of the same course, based on individual faculty preference, are much higher than the personnel costs of a common textbook chosen by the faculty. Similarly, the cost of having sufficient instructional designers and technologists to support each individual faculty member is prohibitive. A common design can increase quality and decrease costs.

Non-centralized course design and textbook selection is also expensive for the face-to-face classroom as well. But when courses are offered online, the inefficiencies are magnified—and with growth, can multiply rapidly. Online education *by itself* cannot bring the benefits of economies of scale.

Traditional models in which each faculty member's course is the "unit of production," guarantee that any growth in online education will increase, not decrease, inefficiencies. If five faculty members each teach a slightly different face-to-face version of the same course, there will be fewer negative impacts on operational costs (negative impacts on student learning are another matter). Online, when course sections differ in learning outcomes, learning resources, and policy nuance, the staff members who support and maintain these courses bear the extra work. Although invisible to faculty, this work comes at a real cost to the university.

No Common Learning Model

"Teaching philosophy" is traditionally treated as a matter of individual expression, unique to each faculty member. Yet this lack of a unified approach to learning is a source of inefficiency is well, and therefore an obstacle to scaling online education.

Learning science has come a long way; we now know a great deal about how humans learn. But most faculty are not aware of this work. Chemists learn chemistry. Psychologists learn psychology. But they teach by modeling what they experienced throughout their education. A common learning model across a university, supported by a rich culture of faculty engagement in improved learning models, creates a far richer learning environment for students and also supports economies of scale in online learning.

Insufficient Resources

Even with the best of intentions for promoting online education, administrators (who began their careers as faculty members) may lack the expertise and resources to create economies of scale. And, an institution must be willing to invest in new systems, processes and personnel to handle rapid and agile scaling processes. The optimum technologies, appropriately trained staff and faculty, and replicable processes are all critical to economies of scale.

Can Scale Help Quality?

With advances in learning science and educational technology, scale does not need to degrade quality. In fact, for the first time perhaps in our history, higher education can scale learning (online) while maintaining or even increasing learning quality. Unlike a face-to-face institution that equates scale to large lecture classrooms, online educators are on the brink of creating personalized learning networks that can serve a larger number of students while helping each one learn more effectively. But this will take investment, new skill sets among faculty and staff, and a new vision for higher education. Are we ready for this next climb?

HIGHER ED AS A BUSINESS

Exploring the Impact of the Amazon Effect on Higher Education

DAVID FRAYER
DIRECTOR OF EXECUTIVE PROGRAMS AT THE ELI BROAD COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

The "Amazon effect" is a phrase used to describe a number of different competitive impacts created by Amazon and its highly effective value chain and online business model, especially as seen through the eyes of more traditional brick-and-mortar competitors. For example, customer expectations with regard to availability and delivery lead times are being influenced by Amazon's wide range of products and rapid distribution model. Amazon Prime has challenged the conventional wisdom related to shipping costs. Even in businesses that are not direct competitors of Amazon, such as industrial conglomerates, aerospace companies and defense contractors, we regularly hear about changing customer expectations, shaped by the new realities of the consumer space, influencing requirements.

The common plea heard from customers is, "If Amazon can do it, why can't you?"

In some ways, the "Amazon effect" is a challenge to existing customer value propositions and the business models that support those value propositions. And, while this is certainly of great concern to organizational forces opposed to change, understanding these new value propositions can create competitive opportunities for those willing to transform. The development of new online routes to market, coupled with the growing realities of the omni-channel supply chains required to support them, is creating significant momentum for change. This momentum has great potential for unlocking new forms of value for customers and the economy.

The Amazon Effect's Impact on Higher Education

While commercial businesses are clearly experiencing the changes brought about by the "Amazon effect," there are many other sectors of the economy that are being impacted as well. For instance, higher education is beginning to reevaluate its own value propositions and business models in light of changing customer expectations, new budgetary realities and the explosion in online learning. The number of online degree programs and online certificate programs continues to grow, but what is more intriguing is the rationale for this growth. Is it an attempt to expand institutional reach and better meet customer needs, especially those of students, parents and employers, or is it simply a means to fill budgetary gaps?

In the Eli Broad College of Business at Michigan State University, we have taken a very customer-oriented approach to online learning and have put customer needs, as well as the overall student experience and learning outcomes, at the forefront of our online development efforts. The needs of students are changing. Millennials are adept

at computer-aided learning and today's working professionals are too busy for extended stays on campus. As a result, we have taken extraordinary steps to ensure the same quality of learning that you would expect in a ground-based classroom in our online offerings.

However, much like commercial businesses experience, the pace of change in the online space is significant and the need to remain an agile learning organization remains paramount. In spite of what some believe, higher education is not a "field of dreams." If you build it, there is no guarantee that students will come.

In the business world, we have seen three primary adjustments that commercial organizations are making to better accommodate changing customer expectations. First, organizations must understand the needs and requirements of their customers at a level of intimacy well beyond what has been typical in the past. Second, organizations must understand which customers they should serve and then segment these customers to better align resources and value propositions (i.e., one size does not fit all). Third, organizations must remain open to new business models as a way to sustain growth and opportunities over time.

These changes all point toward the need to avoid complacency and reliance on the status quo. And, for the first time, organizations have access to advanced analytics and the actual data to help them understand and address these issues.

For higher education, these potential changes are just as relevant. There are a few key questions every postsecondary leader should consider on this topic:

- Does your institution know exactly who its customers are and what their needs are for the future?
- Is this based on past experience or some enlightened understanding of the new realities facing students, parents and employers?
- Where does research fit in this equation?
- Does your institution understand which customers it should serve and how this decision could be made?
- Can you provide different degree or certificate offerings for different customer groups and how do you effectively manage these different offerings?
- Is your institution open to alternative business models, not to replace the primary one, but to supplement and enhance the overall portfolio?

While many higher education institutions are beginning to ask these questions, few have clearly articulated the answers (at least in very public ways).

The Value of Improved Nimbleness and Flexibility for a Higher Education Division

Flexibility and agility are critical considerations in commercial organizations and are growing in importance for higher education. In my area of expertise, executive education, we are being challenged to think differently about education. In the past, we tended to frame our offerings and primary value proposition as creation of educational "programs" that served the needs of individuals and organizations. In today's business environment, though, intensive educational programs are not necessarily the best option. Organizations are seeking solutions to specific challenges and issues that may involve coaching, competency assessments, advisory services, etc. While these approaches may become part of a holistic solution, it is doubtful that the solution for one organization will align with the requirements of another organization. And, this is true for individual learning engagements as well. In the past, the inclination would be to create a generic program that would serve the needs of many different individuals; however, the risk is that such a program might not address the full set of needs for any one individual.

As a result, we need to become much more flexible and agile in defining requirements and how best to meet those requirements. Competency-based learning, micro-learning, MOOCs and any number of other emerging approaches must be considered in this "solution" context. Flexible, online learning is an important part of the solutions mix, too. We have the flexibility to do this in executive education, but we also need institutional support to make it happen.

Of course, not all institutions are willing to support these kinds of transformations. After all, change is difficult, especially within institutions that are much older and more formalized than the customers they serve and surround themselves with. Change can also require considerable resources, so many higher education institutions will find these changes even more challenging.

While it is impossible to accurately predict what might happen if higher education is unable to adjust to these new realities, the experience from business suggests that the result could be dramatic. The *Fortune 500* of today looks dramatically different than the *Fortune 500* of even 20 years ago. Bankruptcies, consolidations and new technologies continue to transform the commercial marketplace. It would be foolish to think that something similar couldn't happen in higher education, too. The challenges are significant, but the opportunities for those who can embrace these new realities could be equally significant and exciting!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Students as Customers: The New Normal in Higher Education

BEA GONZÁLEZ
DEAN OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

A truth continuing education leaders have known and practiced for years is starting to make its way into mainstream higher education conversations, and it's stirring up a great deal of controversy. This truth is the idea that students want to be treated like customers, and doing so actually improves the student experience overall. Critics and traditionalists worry that the academic product will suffer from a customer service mentality, but this is a contentious and debated point. In this interview, Bea González shares her thoughts on what customer service means in the postsecondary environment and reflects on why it's so important for today's learners.

The EvoLLLution (Evo): Why is it important for today's continuing and professional education leaders to have a customer service mentality when serving students?

Bea González (BG): There are a couple of reasons why it's important for continuing and professional education leaders to have a customer service mentality. First, our students have a lot of choices and so we have to provide value to our academic deliveries and we can provide that value by offering excellent service. The second reason is, if we're interested in providing an excellent student experience, then we need to be concerned about customer service.

Evo: Is the customer service mentality restricted to divisions serving exclusively non-traditional students, or should it be adopted by the rest of campus?

BG: So once again, if you're concerned about the student experience at your institution then yes, you need to focus on customer service. Leaders are interested in these things because, as we all know, millennials are changing the way we do business. They're looking for quicker answers, they're looking for answers in places that we never thought people would. For example, they're looking for answers off their mobile phones and they want to be able to respond to and interact with the institution that way as well. They don't necessarily want to meet with you face-to-face, they might want to do a chat or video call. There's lots of ways that we now have to connect with our students in order to provide them with the level of service they're expecting.

Evo: What are some of the roadblocks that stand in the way of institutions being able to deliver that Amazon-style customer experience to today's learners?

BG: Two roadblocks to delivering the Amazon-style experience are culture and tradition. The other is the technology.

In continuing education, we've been experimenting with minimizing these roadblocks because we've been at the forefront of distance learning and online education. As such, we've adjusted the way we communicate with our students and offer other communication modalities, beyond walking to an office or picking up the phone and calling.

The other piece to this customer service conversation is we're seeing shifts in how we teach as well. We're changing our pedagogy due to the availability of instructional technology. If you sit and talk to faculty who are engaged in bringing technology into their classroom, they're finding that the technology has enhanced their teaching, it has enhanced student learning and it has enhanced the overall experience. That's another area at a university and a college campus where I think continuing education was at the forefront, but we're seeing more and more instructional technology making its way into the traditional classroom. The easiest way to discuss it is through the flipped classroom model. Here, on our campus, our faculty have an opportunity to take a course on instructional technology and they are availing themselves of that option, with phenomenal feedback.

Evo: How do you respond to claims that shifting to a customer service mindset will negatively impact the academic quality of postsecondary institutions?

BG: Let me start with this: I don't buy it. I have spent my career in continuing education working with non-traditional students, so the faculty I worked with my entire career are faculty that have been entrepreneurial in this respect, and they haven't been intimidated by different modalities or delivery formats. Our students—particularly the millennials—they expect some of the modalities, the instructional technology and the mobility they have in their everyday lives to be reflected in their educational experience.

The key to facilitating this is the faculty, who have allowed themselves to work with different instructional technologies and to work in the online environment. They're finding that it enhances their teaching and, if their teaching is enhanced, the student experience is enhanced. Whether we call it customer service, excellence in teaching, or the student experience, it's all about putting the learner at the center of operations.

Evo: What's it going to take for CE leaders to bring this idea that you need to treat student like customers to their colleagues on the main campus?

BG: I actually think traditional-age students are going to drive this change on main campuses. They already use technology as a part of their everyday life and so we as institutional leaders and faculty both need to understand that. Faculty are introducing bits and pieces of instructional technology into their traditional course delivery, so that shift is starting to happen.

In student services for traditional-age students, some people talk about one-stop shops, but I'm starting to hear the term "no-stop shop" more and more. What does that mean? That means delivering a totally online, mobile experience that's seamless for students. What we need to remember is that customer service really means developing an exceptional student experience.

Evo: How would you define an excellent student experience?

BG: For us here at University College, delivering a really positive student experience means anticipating our students' needs and working with our students where they are. Our students have diverse backgrounds, whether they have no college experience or some prior college experience, and we have to understand that they don't necessarily know the questions they need to ask. As such, so we have to anticipate their needs and help them navigate higher education bureaucracies in a way that minimizes their stress. We have a one-stop shop and we're moving to a no-stop shop—we're trying to get to a point where all of our services can be done in a mobile environment.

When we're working with a student as higher education professionals, we understand the connection between admissions, financial aid, the bursar, the registrar and academic advising, and we try to make connecting with these entities as seamless as possible for students. If our system is working properly, any student that walks in the door with transcripts in hand and financial aid forms complete can be interviewed, reviewed, admitted and registered within three hours, if everything is working perfectly.

In continuing education, at least in my organization, we know that that the majority of our students finish their admissions process two weeks before the beginning of the semester. In order for us to facilitate their ability to enroll and matriculate, we have to make sure that we have all these pieces in place so their experience is as seamless as possible. We need to minimize any hiccups in the process and do what we call "sticky hand offs"—where we make that connection on behalf of the student when we're handing them off to another department. We know our students are busy and have very little discretionary time, so we want to be as efficient and as respectful of them as possible by giving them solid information that isn't going to trip them up. The worst thing is when the student gets half the information they need and then they get to the next office and they find out there's one more piece they needed—it diminishes their experience significantly. We try to eliminate all of that.

The EvoLLLution

is an online newspaper exclusively for and by those who understand higher education best.

We publish articles and interviews by individuals across the postsecondary space sharing their insights into the state of the higher education industry and their opinions on what the future holds for the industry, all through a uniquely non-traditional lens. From the college dean to the state system president to the working adult, individuals everywhere are retooling, reorganizing and rethinking their way into the 21st century. However, for years, the true innovators in the postsecondary space have been working independently; siloed and unable to communicate with one another.

The EvoLLLution, brainchild of Destiny Solutions, is a grassroots community that aims to bring together these innovators — at every level of every institution — to share their ideas, identify their common challenges and help move higher education into the 21st century.

The evoLLLution
A DESTINY SOLUTIONS ILLUMINATION