

Trends for Higher Education

FALL 2018

Implications of the
External Environment

From demographics and social change to politics and technology, many trends impact planning in higher education. SCUP's *Trends for Higher Education* is designed to help you and your institution make sense of the most significant evolutionary forces.

We look through an array of different lenses to gain some perspective on issues and opportunities that appear to be on the horizon—or at our doors.



About Trends

Demographic shifts. Political changes. Social movements. The evolution of technology. These all affect your institution. SCUP's *Trends for Higher Education* helps you and your institution stay on top of the major changes in the world around you. How?

- » We scan a wide range of sources and identify significant trends and movements outside of higher education.
- » We help you anticipate how these trends might affect your institution.

How can you use Trends?

- » Inform your environmental scanning or SWOT analysis
- » Support strategic planning efforts
- » Discuss the future of higher education
- » Serve as evidence to support your budget requests
- » Assist in program prioritization
- » Help develop new curricula

We've organized Trends using STEEP:

Social: How people work internally (psychology) and with each other (sociology)

Technology: How people use technology (including hardware and software), how society relies on technology, and how technology affects society

Economic: Macro- or microeconomics, including global trends, anything related to jobs and skills needed for jobs, and industry shifts

Environmental: Our external surroundings, including sustainability and our evolving workplaces, cities, and living spaces

Political: Public policy, governmental systems, the people within them, and the effects of government decisions on our citizens and communities

Each trend includes a brief trend summary, a footnoted source, and discussion questions to help you analyze and act on the trend.

Join the Conversation

It's impossible for us to identify every issue you may need to consider. What did we miss? What did we get wrong? Tell us!

E-mail trends@scup.org or tweet [@Plan4HigherEd](https://twitter.com/Plan4HigherEd) with the hashtag [#scuptrends](https://twitter.com/scuptrends)



Social Trends

From fostering free speech to squelching your institution's naysayers and improving its web messaging, how can your campus improve communication? What are some practical tips for improving hiring and holding more productive meetings?

Safe Spaces for Free Speech

In this era of safe spaces, “trigger warnings,” and free speech, universities are often focal points for the expression of opinions. That speaks to their central role as anchor institutions in our democratic society. True to that core mission, a recent survey found 96 percent of university leaders believe it's more important for colleges to enable students to hear differing points of view than it is to ban offensive or biased speech in order to protect students.¹

For discussion

As many colleges and universities have found, maintaining civil discourse and the free expression of multiple points of view is not always easy to do. Assuming your institution's leaders are committed to free speech, how can staff operationalize that commitment in ways that support civilized discussion? What policies and practices can best nurture an environment conducive to the safe expression of free speech? What specific lessons can your institution learn from the experiences of other colleges and universities?

Hire for Adaptability, Not Fit

When hiring a new employee, many organizations seek someone who will fit with the organization's culture. But new research suggests focusing on another factor: adaptability. Researchers found that the degree to which an employee can adapt is a powerful predictor of employee success. The takeaway? Employers should assess how well a potential hire can recognize and internalize an organization's cultural codes and shift behaviors accordingly.²

For discussion

The umbrella term for how well an individual reads cultural codes and adapts is “enculturability.” Signals of adaptability might include whether a prospective employee has lived in a different country or successfully transitioned between different work environments. Given the high cost of recruiting and retaining staff, how might your institution fine-tune the hiring process to gauge for factors like adaptability?

The Dark Side of Transparency

Many call for more transparency in decision making, but closed-door meetings may yield better deliberations. Researchers at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University say that when meetings are open, attendees are less willing to disclose information. Participants are more open with their thoughts in private meetings—potentially making closed sessions better for producing decisions.³

For discussion

How do you balance calls for greater transparency with the discretion needed to discuss sensitive subjects? Where can your institution be more transparent about its decision making, and where has transparency done more harm than good? Are there other ways to communicate how decisions are made?

Cobbler's Kids: Still Barefoot

A recent Gallup survey found that only 40 percent of staff and faculty in colleges and universities said they had opportunities to “learn and grow” in the past year. That puts higher education in the bottom quartile on “learn and grow” measures. A Gallup analyst said it was a “tragic irony” that institutions devoted to learning and development apparently fall short on that mission when it comes to their own staff members.⁴

For discussion

The Gallup analyst suggested that few colleges and universities pay enough attention to employee engagement, well-being, and professional development and said that higher education is one of the last industries “to recognize and embrace this type of employee development.” How does your institution compare to the survey results? What more could your institution do to help every employee learn and grow in their job?

Reflecting on Change

Sheila Cote-Meek, associate vice president for academic and Indigenous programs at Laurentian University in Ontario, urges leaders to take time to reflect on change. She offers four principles: stay focused on your own vision and goals, remain respectful, maintain your integrity, and stand up for what you believe.⁵ Meanwhile, the Boston Consulting Group says its research validates that CEOs who make time to reflect find it is time well spent.⁶

For discussion

We sometimes get so caught up in the urgency of executing change that we neglect to reflect on its impact and ramifications. Sometimes, too, doing what seems expedient may lead us away from our personal values. Especially when budget constraints force tough choices, how does your institution and its people stay true to their values? In your daily work, how do you as an individual stay true to your personal values? How do you react when those values are challenged? Do you and your colleagues take time to reflect on your actions?

Jettison the Jargon

Jakob Nielsen, a highly touted expert on Internet communication, has a principle that suggests websites “should speak the users’ language, with words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms.”⁷ But as higher education marketing consultant Bob Johnson notes, universities often use internal jargon—even on recruitment websites. Terms like “disbursement,” “bursar,” or even “undergraduate” may not be immediately clear to a high school student, Johnson observes.⁸

For discussion

Higher education can be notorious for using jargon. But at what point does jargon impede communications? In its marketing and other outreach, for example, does your institution rely on jargon when plain language would suffice? As universities compete more ferociously for students and as more first-time-in-college students seek to enroll, an audit of how your institution communicates with outside stakeholders—online and in print—could uncover ways to improve communication with those who may not understand higher education’s lingo.

A Growth Mind-set Culture

Researchers at Stanford University have studied how having a growth mind-set can be more beneficial to an individual than having a fixed mind-set. Now they are applying these findings to organizational culture: cultures with a growth mind-set nurture valuable employee qualities like innovation, learning, and collaboration.⁹

For discussion

The researchers found that growth-minded organizations are more likely to recognize leadership potential among employees, who in turn may have a more demonstrably positive view of their employer and colleagues than peers in organizations with fixed mind-sets. What kind of mind-set pervades your institution? In the interest of encouraging employee innovation and collaboration, does it actively cultivate a growth mind-set culture? If not, how could it change?

Debbie Downers and Negative Nathans

Perpetually negative characters like Debbie Downer are stereotypes precisely because most organizations seem to have at least one chronic naysayer. Perhaps funny on TV, such characters can stifle new ideas and zap organizational creativity. How to cope? Resist inclinations to go around—or over—such colleagues. Rather, says leadership development coach Art Petty, use communications tools like respect and empathy to win over obstinate colleagues.¹⁰

For discussion

Among other strategies, Petty says organizations can appeal to a naysayer's expertise. Another tact: create scenarios that charge naysayers with framing solutions to problems on their own terms. How effective is your institution in addressing the negative effect that naysayers can have? Rather than allow such stakeholders to have their way, what strategies can your institution employ to turn "Negative Nathans" into more productive colleagues?

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Technology Trends

What changes will AI and robotics bring? How can we learn to learn from failure, make our IT strategy more strategic, and figure out how to outwit the hackers?

Slightly Cloud-y

The consulting firm Huron says cloud-based technology offers new pathways to “institutional growth and transformation.” Experts find, however, that just 20 percent of colleges and universities are currently taking full advantage of the cloud to leverage strategic change. Huron suggests more institutions could use the cloud to improve agility and efficiency, reduce costs, enhance constituent experiences, and create opportunities to innovate.¹¹

For discussion

No doubt your institution has talked about moving some solutions to the cloud, and it likely already uses some cloud technology. But has your institution thought *strategically* about how to maximize cloud technology? Beyond incremental improvements in efficiency and data sharing, can your institution leverage that technology even further? For example, how could use of the cloud enable your institution to be more innovative? What factors have impeded migration to the cloud in the past—and how can those obstacles be overcome?

Geezers and Robots

Looking into the 2020s and beyond, the consulting firm Bain & Company believes that two forces—automation and older employees—will redefine the workforce. Bain projects that automation, including “humanoid service robots,” will replace millions of workers worldwide. But simultaneously, retiring Baby Boomers and a slowing birth rate will create a demand for skilled labor that may make older workers more attractive.¹²

For discussion

Bain’s research suggests that through 2030, Boomers aged 55 to 74 will supply most of the growth in the labor pool. If that holds true, how might this affect the workforce at your institution? If you can’t find younger workers, will you need to consider incentives to keep older workers on staff? Will you have to do more to help older workers gain new skills?

AI’s Golden Age

Venture capitalist Frank Chen says we may be entering a golden age for artificial intelligence (AI). While it has sputtered since its birth in the 1950s, AI is different today because analyzing big piles of data can result in deep learning and important breakthroughs in knowledge. Chen says that opportunities to use AI are expanding as it improves, providing more accurate predictions and insights about customer behavior and desires.¹³

For discussion

Chen says AI has applications in virtually every industry and “will definitely either increase revenue or decrease costs.” If that’s true in higher education, what would the return on investment in AI look like? Could you envision applying AI at your institution to help students navigate basic business transactions like paying tuition—or even deciding to enroll at your school in the first place? Could AI answer basic questions in the classroom or augment student advising?

Technology Is the Strategy

A thought-provoking paper from IBM argues that in a world of “digital disruption,” traditional approaches to strategy development may not work as well as they once did. One key change: decisions about technology used to come after strategy was decided, but today technology often defines what is possible—and essentially is the strategy. That means both that strategists need to ask different key questions and that strategic planning needs to be more organic, cyclical, and flexible.¹⁴

For discussion

Digital technologies are obviously transforming teaching, learning, and business practices across higher education. But what are technology’s effects on the planning process? Have planning processes at your institution adapted to today’s fast pace? How well does your institution anticipate how emerging technologies might help it advance, and how fast can it adopt those new tools?

Deeper dive

The IBM paper asserts that “successful strategy development has moved beyond just diagnosing and solving problems.” The paper argues that organizations today need planning that helps them deploy, validate, and scale strategies quickly and that can evolve as the competitive landscape changes.

Planning to Fail

We hear a lot of talk these days about the need for innovation in higher education, but change doesn’t come easy in the academy. In part that’s because higher education is tradition bound and tends to be risk averse. At a recent conference, campus IT and business leaders struggled to find ways their institutions can get more comfortable with risk taking and the incremental failures that are part of innovation.¹⁵

For discussion

If your institution is like most, its culture does not embrace change, let alone leave room for the kinds of failures that can lead to innovation. How did your institution handle its most recent failure? Do disincentives stifle attempts at new ideas? Are there ways to take small risks that could be successfully managed even if they end in failure? Are there non-threatening ways to get colleagues to talk about change, risk, and failure—and plan how your institution could be faster to innovate?

Prime Targets for Hackers

Colleges and universities remain prime targets for hackers, ranking only behind institutions in health care and the financial sector in the number of breaches. A recent report found that hacking in higher education more than doubled between 2016 and 2017. Hackers especially want personal and financial information to help them commit identity theft. Potential remedies? Robust data governance policies and practices, educating data users to protect data, and putting a firewall between apps and operating systems.¹⁶

For discussion

How prepared is your institution to stave off cyberattacks? Do your data governance policies adequately guard the flow of data? How well does your institution train the many people across campus who have access to data and who need data to perform their jobs? How can your institution best balance the growing need for data on campus with the parallel need to protect those data from “bad actors”?

Know Your GDPR?

As of May 2018, the European Union adopted new data privacy laws that likely will affect many colleges and universities. Mandating how personal data are collected, stored, and used, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) includes statutes that could apply, for example, to digital interactions with international students, alumni, and researchers abroad. Failure to comply can result in fines.¹⁷

For discussion

Experts fear that many colleges and universities in the United States may not be fully aware of the GDPR, let alone in compliance with its regulations. How does your institution measure up? Assuming that your institution has some activity in or interaction with countries in the European Union, has it fully planned for how it will comply with the GDPR? If not, what further steps are needed?

EdTech Circa 2038

One of today's most innovative university presidents, Paul LeBlanc, who leads Southern New Hampshire University, recently penned some thoughts about the future of technology in education. LeBlanc predicts that we'll see more use of games as "immersive learning environments." He says augmented reality (AR) may prove more powerful than virtual reality (VR) as a learning tool because it is a doorway to "hybrid reality." LeBlanc also believes that the Internet of Things will provide invaluable inputs for "connected learners."¹⁸

For discussion

In classrooms and research laboratories as well as in administrative operations, how well is your institution poised to take advantage of emerging technologies? If your institution is just coming up the curve on technologies that other institutions consider commonplace tools, how can you speed the pace of technology adoption? What conversations need to take place, and who should be involved, to help your institution learn more about emerging technologies? How can you budget for such technologies?

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Blockchain Comes to Campus

Institutions continue to dip their toes in blockchain technology, the foundation of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and a potential new way to store data, including student records and credentials. Although we're still in the early days, blockchain is seen as having potential for keeping digitally stored data private and secure. Experts also see blockchain as a tool for documenting and validating student learning and credentials. Looking a bit further downstream, experts suggest that blockchain might enhance pedagogy, in part by supporting deeper interdisciplinary collaborations, and might change the way education is priced and paid for.^a

Blockchain has also become a focus of research. Under a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, for example, researchers at San José State University's School of Information are exploring how blockchain might be used in the university's libraries. Potential applications include enhanced metadata systems, authenticating primary sources and intellectual property, and keeping track of digital publication sales and rights.^b Columbia, MIT, and Stanford have each recently invested in blockchain-focused research programs.^c

While much of the focus on blockchain and higher education remains theoretical, a few institutions have pioneered blockchain credentials. MIT, for example, collaborated with a vendor to develop an app, Blockcerts Wallet, through which students can carry a verifiable, tamper-proof version of their diploma to share with employers and others.^d Another innovator, Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque, recently became the first community college to issue blockchain-based student-owned digital credentials.^e

For discussion

How well does your institution understand blockchain technology specifically and, more broadly, its potential implications for higher education? How well has it thought through how blockchain might change, for instance, the way student credentials are stored and distributed? Is your institution anticipating how blockchain might influence pedagogy? Has it analyzed how this emerging technology might change the business model for how learners pay for college?

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Economic Trends

Exploring the economy-enrollment connection, pursuing partnerships, and a lesson from a Nobel winner about how to help students succeed.

A Nobel for Nudges

Richard Thaler won the Nobel Prize in Economics for work focused in part on how individuals make decisions. Thaler popularized his theories about “choice architecture” in a recent book titled *Nudge*. Now, researchers at the University of Virginia have applied “nudge” theory in a free tool kit that offers “cost-effective, evidence-based behavioral innovations” designed to help students enroll in college, complete a degree or credential, and make good financial choices.²⁴

For discussion

Researchers are learning that today’s students sometimes need just a relatively small boost—or nudge—to help them succeed in college. How might your institution use some of the techniques codified in the UVA “nudge” tool kit to help its students succeed? Specifically, how can those tips help students gain access to your institution, complete their academic programs, and manage their finances effectively?

For discussion

Economists can’t know for certain when the economy will go south again, but economic cycles suggest another recession is inevitable. If a downturn occurs relatively soon, as many experts predict, and if researchers are right that bad times make more students return to college, how prepared is your institution to accommodate an enrollment jump? Programmatically, how might your institution anticipate that, and could it develop a strategy that could be operationalized at the right time?

More Outsourcing Ahead

In a new book, Peter Smith, a former university president (and past member of Congress), argues that universities should look beyond contracts for things like facilities and food management and outsource even more services. Given the competition in higher education and the economic pressures that institutions face, Smith urges universities to identify what the institution does best and contract out for services that are not essential to the core mission.²⁶

For discussion

No doubt your institution contracts out for a number of services. But is the time right to evaluate your outsourcing? What other services could or should be farmed out? What new partnerships could help your institution in that regard? What would it take to change your institution’s mind-set so that it is open to outsourcing services it has traditionally fulfilled in house?

When Markets Fall, Enrollments Climb

A recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau tracked an uptick in college enrollments during the Great Recession of 2007–2009. The report found that “among people ages 15 to 34 who were not enrolled a year earlier, 1.0 million more enrolled in college in 2010 than in 2006.” Analysts said those changes were consistent with research that has found contractions in the economy motivate individuals to seek additional training.²⁵

Deeper dive

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities recently published guidelines for successful university partnerships with outside vendors and other entities. Among other principles, the report says that college leaders need to invest substantial time in partnerships and that due diligence includes a thorough understanding of a potential partner's motivations for collaboration.²⁷

For discussion

We're hearing more these days about colleges struggling, merging, and, yes, even closing. Higher education may ultimately prove resilient—and for-profit institutions may be more fragile than not-for-profit ones—but nonetheless, colleges and universities face unprecedented economic pressures. Is your institution facing these realities with its eyes wide open? How honest is your institution about its current financial condition and its financial future? How realistic is it in factoring economic challenges into its planning?

Branding Out from the Crowd

As competition between institutions increases, colleges need to do all they can to define and promote their unique value propositions. Experts advise being clear about an institution's brand and continuously monitoring the brand's health. Institutions with tarnished or unclear brands need to take a deep look at what they mean to stakeholders—such as students and parents—and may have to refocus on their core business.²⁸

For discussion

Every college and university says it has great faculty, outstanding facilities, and countless opportunities for students. How can your institution cut through that predictable messaging to articulate what is truly unique? If your institution has trouble talking about things like “brand,” how can it develop more comfort with branding? How can members of the community who might resist branding get on board to help colleagues whose charge is marketing the institution?

Data Rich, Insight Poor

As colleges and universities collect more data that can inform business practices and help students succeed, the consulting firm Ellucian says too many remain “data rich but insight poor.” To make the most of growing troves of data, the company advises first identifying the business case for data analytics: how can the institution best use data and for what mission-critical purposes? Then, define how data will be used and governed. Finally, “make data relevant and approachable for users.”³⁰

For discussion

Optimizing evidence-based decision making across a range of business and academic considerations is fast becoming essential for colleges and universities. Has your institution thought strategically about how it collects data and, more to the point, how it analyzes the data and acts on those findings? Has your institution developed the right goals for its data analytics and established the right governing practices to ensure that it optimizes insights derived from its data?

From Disrupted to Bankrupt

Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen is famous—some would say infamous—as the guy who introduced the term “disruption” into business jargon. Long an advocate for more innovation in higher education, Christensen recently predicted that half of the 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States will be bankrupt in 10 to 15 years. Shortly after that bold projection, he told a different audience the end of some institutions might come even sooner.²⁹

The Economy of Sharing

For researchers, the latest technology often comes with a high price tag—at a time when appropriations for higher education are down and budgets are tight. That is encouraging institutions to do more sharing of big-ticket resources. As one example, the universities of Maryland and Virginia, along with Georgetown and Johns Hopkins, are partners in the Mid-Atlantic Shared Services Consortium (MASSC), which provides “easy, reciprocal access” to specialized technical services, equipment, and expertise.³¹

For discussion

Upsides of sharing research resources, like cost savings and access to specialized equipment, have to be balanced against downsides, like fears about competition. Has your institution considered how it might share research services and equipment with other institutions? What would be the potential advantages and disadvantages? What protocols and guidelines would be necessary to ensure the success of such partnerships?

Aligning Curricula with the Workplace

A new report suggests that after two recent waves of reform—one aimed at helping students access college, the other at helping them succeed academically—higher education needs to gear up for a new challenge. Given rapid changes in the world of work, the report says, universities will need to do more to align curricula and pedagogy with a fast-evolving workplace. Also imperative: designing academic programs that specifically meet the needs of lifelong learners.³²

For discussion

The report states that “the future of work will require a more flexible, dynamic, and equitable system of preparation.” How flexible is your institution? Can it (or does it) adjust to the changing workplace environment that your graduates must prepare for? How well prepared is it to provide lifelong learning to workers? How might your institution need to retool its academic programs to better meet the needs of the future workplace?

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Making Business Operations Agile

It's a bit of a cliché—but also generally true—that change and innovation move more slowly in higher education than in the Silicon Valley. But with edtech companies challenging higher education's hegemony like never before (consider, for example, Udacity's one-year “nano degree” in computer programming), colleges and universities may need to speed things up if they want to remain competitive.

Many innovative companies use variations of “agile” practice, collaborating across functions at a fast clip to iterate innovations. A blog posting on the Oracle Corporation's website posits that higher education could successfully adopt agile practices in one of its historically stodgy operations, finances.

To succeed today, the posting argues, higher education needs its finance operations to spend less time gathering data and writing reports and more time analyzing data in ways that can inform business decisions. The finance function should evolve its mission, the posting suggests, so that it becomes “a business co-pilot, using predictive analytics and modeling to guide strategy and improve resource allocation.”

How can higher education adopt an agile finance model? Three broad goals should drive the shift to more agile operations: greater efficiency via automation, better information to predict the future, and more influence on business outcomes. The Oracle blog posting suggests automating more processes; investing in powerful analytics tools; working in cross-functional, multidisciplinary teams; and training professionals to develop new skills. Also on the agenda: making sure that business units and decision makers get the information they need when they need it.^f

For discussion

Could elements of agile practice help your institution's business operations provide analyses to drive better institutional decision making? Could “agile” improve operations in other administrative departments? If so, what would that look like at your institution? What would be needed to make that happen?

f A New Operating Model for Higher Education

Keith Rajecki, Oracle, August 28, 2017

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Environmental Trends

Beyond your carbon footprint, is it time to also consider nitrogen? Are makerspaces inhospitable to women? As costs fall, do solar panels deserve another look?

Are You Nitrogen Neutral?

Collaborating with colleagues at the University of Virginia, researchers at the University of New Hampshire have released a new tool designed to help campuses track both their carbon and nitrogen use. Expanding on carbon-focused calculators, the Sustainability Indicator Management and Analysis Platform (SIMAP) adds the capacity to track a university's nitrogen footprint. That adds food purchases to sustainability tracking. Future versions may add tracking of indicators like phosphorus and water.³⁴

For discussion

Tools like the SIMAP are designed to help institutions determine baselines for levels of energy consumption, benchmark goals for improvement, and track progress. How sophisticated is your institution in measuring—and improving—its carbon and nitrogen footprints? Is it time to add a nitrogen measure? Are there ways your institution could improve its use of these kinds of sustainability measures?

Hardhats Hard to Come By

Planning a major capital project? Construction might get delayed ... and be more expensive. Most regions of the United States have a shortage of skilled laborers, in part because older workers are retiring. Virtually all the trades are seeing a dearth of hardhats, but in particular contractors need more workers who specialize in concrete, electrical, drywall, and erecting steel. Experts worry this trend will drive up labor costs.³⁵

For discussion

If your institution is planning a major construction project, has it anticipated and planned for the potential effects of the labor shortage in the construction trades? If your institution offers relevant academic programs, could it help address that shortage by educating more students to have the skills construction firms need?

Improved Renewables

One downside of technologies that harvest wind and solar energy is that sunlight and wind vary greatly. A new hybrid approach addresses that by combining solar panels with wind turbines and adequate power-storage capacity. Improved interface designs make it easier to capture direct current from solar panels without the need to first convert it. Another plus: the hybrid power plants can be relatively small and thus sit closer to users who need the power they produce.³⁶

For discussion

As institutions explore alternative power sources, emerging technologies in wind and solar energy may prove increasingly cost effective. Given the high cost of transmitting power over distances, schools in more remote locations might benefit from compact hybrid wind/solar plants located close to campus. As your school works toward better solutions for its energy needs, do recent upgrades in alternative energy technology offer new strategies and solutions?

Makerspaces: Unwelcoming for Women?

Researchers based at Drexel University studied the culture of 30 K–12 makerspaces around the country. Taking an “ethnographic” view, the researchers found pronounced gender bias. One telling pattern: instructors routinely referred to male students using “maker terminology” like “geek” or “builder,” but still referred to female students as “girls” and tended to view boys as more proficient with technology. Researchers also found a lack of female leaders in makerspaces.³⁷

For discussion

Given that women out-enroll men in college and that society needs more women in many fields where men once dominated, it behooves colleges and universities to take extra steps to make opportunities more equitable for women. On your campus, what programs and opportunities are male dominated? Even if it is unintentional, does your institution send subtle messages that women are not as valued in such opportunities as their male counterparts? How could you change that culture for the better?

Deeper dive

Researchers have also found inequity for women in apprenticeship opportunities. One recent study found that women held just 7.3 percent of apprenticeships in 2017, even though opportunities for apprenticeships have started to expand beyond traditionally male-dominated fields like the construction trades into areas like early childhood education and information technology.³⁸

All in for Solar

When Hampshire College considered solar energy in 2011, the cost of installing the necessary panels was considered too high. Fast forward to late 2017, though, when the private liberal arts college in Amherst, Massachusetts, announced it had successfully tested a system designed to help the college draw all its energy needs from solar power. Now affordable, some 15,000 solar panels will produce 4.7 megawatts of power annually—more than the college needs.³⁹

For discussion

Hampshire partnered with the solar energy firm SolarCity, which built the college’s solar panel farm. The college purchases electricity from the company at a fixed rate roughly half of what it had been paying. Could a similar model help your institution lower energy costs while pursuing sustainability goals? How might such a program be structured at your institution? What next steps could advance your institution toward such an approach?

Large-Scale Net Zero

When construction started in 2011, the Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) Building at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) was designed to be one of the largest net-zero energy buildings in the country—no small feat given Illinois’ relatively harsh climate. Honored in 2017 by the American Institute of Architects, the 230,000-square-foot building includes solar panels and passive heating and cooling features designed to help it eventually earn both “net zero” and LEED Platinum certification.⁴⁰

For discussion

State budget woes have delayed progress toward true “net zero” at UIUC’s ECE Building, but long-planned solar panels will be installed by the end of 2018 and officials remain committed to ultimately getting to “net zero.”⁴¹ What lessons can your institution take from UIUC’s perseverance? Even if your institution is tightening its belt, can it still pursue sustainability in large-scale capital projects? How can your university balance tight budgets with goals for saving energy?

Rehab or Build New?

Is it better to renovate an existing building or build a new one? Architect Jim Galloway says there’s no one right answer. Key considerations? What are the goals for the building’s functions and efficiency? What programs does it need to serve? What is needed to ensure the facility is up to code? What are the opportunity costs of taking the building off line? Does the building need to be preserved for historic reasons? How do costs of rehab compare to building new?⁴²

For discussion

Galloway urges a thorough decision-making and planning process that addresses these factors and other critical considerations. Looking back at past efforts, how well did your institution analyze all relevant factors in planning key capital projects? What lessons can be learned from past performance? As you think about projects that may be on the horizon, is your institution's facilities planning process adequately thorough and comprehensive? How could that process be improved?

Growing Smaller

Higher education took notice this past summer when Fayetteville State University announced plans to raze two dormitories—and not rebuild them. One key reason? The school is serving more adult students who don't need dorms.⁴³ Overall, though, higher education is still in something of a building boom. A 2017 report found 10 percent growth in campus space from 2007 to 2016, while enrollment growth was just 8 percent over the same period.⁴⁴

For discussion

If your institution is like most universities, construction of new facilities is widely seen as a sign of success, strength, and growth. But are those attributes fully warranted? Given that the undergraduate student population is contracting in many regions and more students are studying online, how much space does your campus need? How can your institution change a “more is better” mind-set?

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Gown for Town

In recent years, colleges and universities that view themselves as local “anchor institutions” have sought to be more intentional about economic and social outreach in their communities. A recent report from the Democracy Collaborative, a national research institute, frames principles that universities can follow to serve this role effectively. Having a high-ranking champion for the work at the university is key as is linking the work to the institution’s strategic plan. Campus committees are instrumental for driving the work. Defining and collecting key metrics keeps the work relevant and on target. Another imperative? Establishing and sustaining strong partnerships with community organizations.^g

An analyst for Bloomberg recently cited a government blog posting that looked at the overwhelmingly positive impact that one small institution, the University of Pikeville, had on its hometown of Pikeville, Kentucky. The blog suggested that by providing education, research, and medical care and supporting businesses that serve students, the university had stimulated economic activity that revitalized its town.^h

For discussion

In an era when multiple studies have shown erosion in public support for higher education, colleges and universities need to clearly and persuasively communicate the value they provide in their local regions and states. One place to start might be by clarifying a single institution’s commitment to and impact in its local community. How effective is your institution in communicating about its impact on the local economy? How strong is its role in local economic development and entrepreneurship? What community groups does it partner with, and how healthy are those partnerships? What further steps could your institution take to expand and solidify its role as a regional “anchor institution”?

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Emily Sladek, Democracy Collaborative

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Political Trends

How is the Trump administration affecting higher education? Does accreditation have a downside? Can universities better serve workplace needs?

Research Support Improves ... Barely

After many years of generally declining support, the FY18 budget that Congress passed increased funding for research through such agencies as the National Institutes of Health and Department of Energy. Dedicated to ensuring that the United States remains a world leader in innovation, a coalition of some 500 civic leaders recently cited specific areas where progress had been made, such as renewing the federal commitment to scientific discovery. Of concern, though, is U.S. immigration policy, which the group contends stymies innovation and economic competition.⁴⁷

For discussion

While there is robust bipartisan support for federal investment in research, that support cannot be taken for granted. What can your institution do to help the public better understand how university research contributes to innovation in the United States? What can your institution do to help stakeholders like legislators understand how critical federal research funding is for supporting innovation and economic growth?

Brexit and Research Funding in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union—colloquially called “Brexit”—might change the calculus for research funding in Europe. While details about Brexit have yet to be fully hammered out, a recent survey of European researchers suggested that Brexit will lead to reduced funding from the European Union for research at British universities. Universities in the United Kingdom are currently the nexus for much international research, and it is unclear how reduced EU funding might change that leadership role.⁴⁸

For discussion

If researchers at your institution collaborate with colleagues in Europe, Brexit may change those relationships. With diminished funding from the European Union, UK universities may engage in less research overall, which may affect international research collaboration. At the same time, reallocated EU funding may make collaboration with researchers in other EU countries more attractive. These same issues may also affect the flow of international students across EU countries and elsewhere.

Does Accreditation Stifle Innovation?

A prominent education analyst recently argued that accreditation stifles innovation in higher education. Citing examples where innovative programs in one region were approved while similar efforts in another region were squelched, Michael Horn argues that accreditation standards and their interpretation are inconsistent between regional accrediting bodies. Another beef: Horn says the accreditation process gauges “inputs” when it ought to be looking at outcomes.⁴⁹

For discussion

Even though Congressional efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act languish, it's likely that lawmakers will continue to examine quality in higher education and the processes used to accredit colleges and universities. Your institution should watch this landscape carefully. How have accreditation requirements affected innovation at your institution? If accreditation requirements or processes change, is your institution prepared to react? Can leaders at your institution influence the debate about accreditation either directly with members of Congress or with your regional accreditor?

Scrutiny From State Legislators

Tracking trends in state higher education policy, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities predicts that U.S. midterm elections in 2018 will lead state politicians to raise concerns about how well colleges prepare workers for future jobs. Also likely to get highlighted: adult education, workforce grants, and public-private partnerships. While many states have trimmed support for higher education, legislators still view universities as key to economic innovation and growth.⁵⁰

For discussion

Legislator interest in how colleges prepare graduates for the workforce is not just an election-year priority. Fueled by concerns of employers that higher education is not training workers to have the right skills for the 21st-century workplace, politicians are looking at workforce preparation issues with an increasingly sharper focus. How well does your institution stack up under such scrutiny—and how well does it communicate its achievements to lawmakers? Might the increased attention during the 2018 midterms be an opportunity to showcase your institution's impacts?

Deeper dive

A recent report proposes a network of state-based “apprenticeship institutes” that would anchor efforts to broaden, manage, and nurture student opportunities for practical training. Also proposed: a federal apprenticeship loan program. The report cites model programs in several Western European countries, including Germany and Switzerland.⁵¹

Miles Apart on Policy

The political divide in the United States is starkly reflected in higher education bills proposed by parties in Congress. In their Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity Through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act, House Republicans would cut financial aid and pare regulations on for-profit colleges. The Aim Higher Act, the Democratic response announced in 2018, pushes debt-free college and more financial aid and would retain and even expand accountability requirements in the for-profit sector.⁵²

For discussion

Observers say that neither bill has much of a chance to pass into law. Pundits say both measures represent a bit of political theater, with parties playing to their bases and testing themes for future elections. The political stalemate in Congress seems likely to continue, but colleges and universities should continue to monitor potential higher education policy carefully. Institutions may need to do more to lobby their representatives in favor of policies that support students and the colleges and universities they attend.

The Trump Administration's Effect on Higher Education

A panel of experts recently cited several ways in which the Trump administration is having an influence on higher education. Department of Justice investigations are pressing issues around free speech and college admissions, including affirmative action. The Department of Education is rolling out changes in regulations that affect student loans as well as how for-profit colleges operate. Up in the air: changes in policies that would allow students to stop paying loans to colleges that defrauded them.⁵³ In the future, new appointees to the Supreme Court could have a big influence on higher education—in affirmative action, for example.

For discussion

The Trump administration seems likely to continue its work on education policy. Colleges and universities should be vigilant in understanding how Trump administration directives and actions are having a significant impact on the landscape of higher education. In addition, expect the cost and quality of college—among other higher education issues—to get a fair amount of attention in the next presidential election.

O Cannabis!

Now that Canada has approved the recreational use of cannabis, Canadian universities are scrambling to revise policies for marijuana use on campus. A particular challenge: universities have to balance national law with sometimes competing regulations imposed by provinces and local municipalities. On campus, existing restrictions on smoking might apply but don't cover the use of edible cannabis. Another issue: can students grow marijuana in their dorm rooms?⁵⁴

For discussion

The need to rethink campus cannabis policy in the wake of revised national law underscores the need for higher education to be nimble in responding to changes in national policy. The experience at Canadian universities may also come into play in the United States, where many states are starting to relax their laws concerning marijuana use. As your institution scans federal and state policy, are its policies about the use of marijuana up to date? What other policy changes—federal or state, recent or on the horizon—might warrant a review of institutional policies?

International Growth Online

Trump administration immigration policies have cast a shadow on the growth in international students coming to study in the United States. But amid that trend, some institutions are looking to boost enrollment of international students online. Perhaps because there are many stumbling blocks, that market is much smaller than the flow of students in person. Changing, though, is that places abroad that once shunned online education, like Hong Kong and Dubai, are now more open to the concept. One difference: MOOCs from prominent universities have given online education more caché abroad.⁵⁵

For discussion

At least one expert suggests that progress in exporting U.S. online learning to other countries will continue to break down resistance abroad—and potentially open the door for more such activity. Assuming your institution is looking to recruit more international students, has it considered a play for that market via online learning? How well does your institution understand that market and the pitfalls that can block success? Is there room for your institution to take the lead in this emerging opportunity?

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The Debate Over Student Data

Expect ongoing debate about the value and pitfalls of collecting and analyzing data about student performance in higher education. Federal legislators on both sides of the aisle support legislation to make colleges collect and share more data about graduation rates and student job placements, among other metrics. The lobbying group for private colleges and universities recently changed its stance to be more open to some form of carefully regulated data collection. But privacy concerns persist about establishing a federal data repository based on individual students.ⁱ

A recent study based at the Fordham University School of Law identified 14 data brokers that sell, have sold, or advertise the sale of personal information about high school students. The problem? “There is very little transparency as to the overall marketplace for student data,” the report said, and the market for student data “is opaque from the perspective of students and parents.”^j Federal legislators may consider related issues in the context of reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, but specific action may be slowed by the Trump administration’s anti-regulation propensity. Meanwhile, legislators in California and Vermont, for example, have considered doing more to regulate data brokers.

For discussion

As users and producers of student data, institutions of higher education must pay close attention to what may be growing legislative focus on issues around access to student data and related privacy concerns. Debate at the federal level underscores the need for universities to develop sound practices and policies to guide them in collecting and using student data and protecting student privacy. Does your institution track the discussion at the federal level, and does it help lobby Congress to make sure legislation reflects the interests of higher education? At the institutional level, when was the last time your university took a close look at its student data privacy policies and related procedures for handling student data? Is it time for such an audit? Are changes needed?

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Robots Will Take Our Jobs ... and Create New Ones

Futurist Thomas Frey gained notoriety by predicting that more than two billion jobs will disappear by 2030, due in part to automation. But Frey doesn't predict wide-scale unemployment. Rather, he believes new jobs will emerge, framed around technologies like drones, robots, and blockchain versus professions like nurse or engineer. He says future jobs will include “robot sherpas” (to support smart robots), “drone command crews,” “personal health maestros,” and “asteroid miners,” among others.^k

Researchers at McKinsey, meanwhile, see a future where automation and AI technologies will transform the workplace. Human interaction with ever-smarter machines will boost productivity and prosperity, they predict. Workers will need new technological, social, and emotional skills—but won't need the same basic cognitive or physical and manual skills that are needed today.^l That resonates with perspectives from another futurist, Liselotte Lyngsø, founding partner of the consultancy Future Navigator, who suggests that as machines do more routine work, humans will have to step up to their best potential. “The machines will become very good at being machines in the years ahead,” she told the magazine *Fast Company*, “so we need to be extremely good at being humans again.”^m

For discussion

If automation and AI take hold to the extent that some futurists say they will, how might that change the skill sets that colleges and universities will have to help their students learn? How might the rise of robots in the workplace affect the curriculum? How well is your institution prepared to educate learners for emerging jobs? As workplace evolution speeds up, how can universities help workers get periodic infusions of new training throughout their careers? How flexible is your institution in retooling to meet those demands? How might the evolving world of work change the way your institution structures its own employees' jobs? What impact will automation at universities have on future hires and the skill sets universities recruit for?

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Society for College and University Planning
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About the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP)

The Society for College and University Planning is a community of higher education planning professionals that provides its members with the knowledge and resources to establish and achieve institutional planning goals within the context of best practices and emerging trends. For more information, visit www.scup.org.

What is Integrated Planning?

Integrated planning is the linking of vision, priorities, people, and the physical institution in a flexible system of evaluation, decision-making and action. It shapes and guides the entire organization as it evolves over time and within its community.