

Beyond Hybrid

Hybrid learning has been an essential part of many institutions' COVID response — but it's not the end of the story. Here are key considerations for higher education through the pandemic and beyond.

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Table of Contents

Envisioning the Future of Higher Ed in a Post-Pandemic World 3

Five college presidents give their views of what's next for higher education.

Educause Identifies Top IT Issues for an Uncertain Future 8

The association for information technology professionals in higher education has taken a different approach to its annual report on the top issues in IT: laying out possible scenarios for emerging from the pandemic over the coming year.

15 Trends Shaping the Future of Higher Education 11

The Educause 2020 Horizon Report has identified 15 social, technological, higher education and political trends that are influencing teaching and learning in higher ed today – and will have a lasting impact on tomorrow.

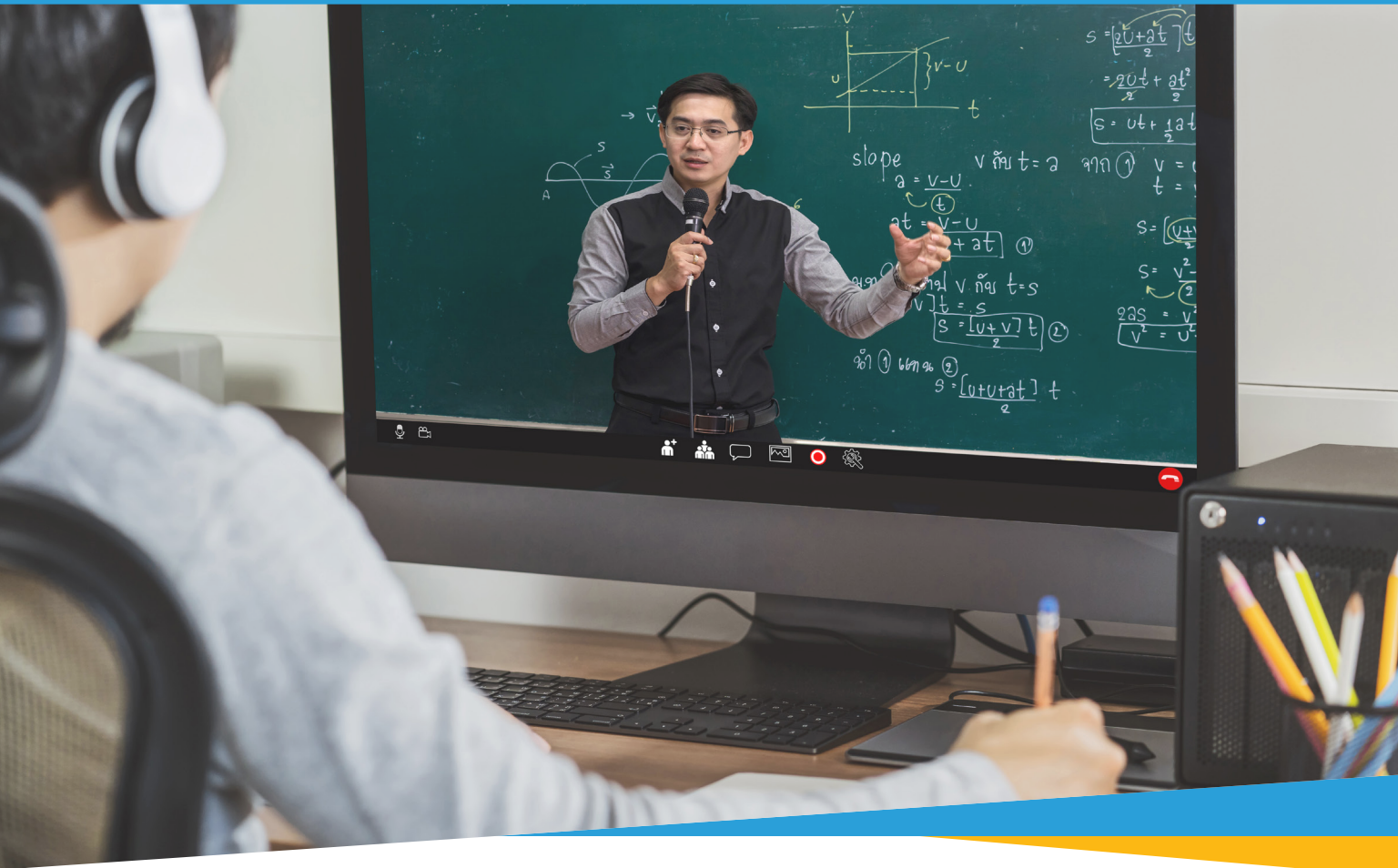
Mental Health, Institutional Finances Top of Mind for University Presidents 14

In a survey from the American Council on Education, presidents reported the top concerns for their institutions in the fall semester.

5 Ways to Deliver High-Quality, Equitable Digital Learning Experiences 16

A report from Every Learner Everywhere and Tyton Partners recommends five ways higher ed institutions can more equitably serve students.





Envisioning the Future of Higher Ed in a Post-Pandemic World

Five college presidents give their views of what's next for higher education. **BY DIAN SCHAFFHAUSER**

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION look like? A panel of five university and college presidents offered their crystal-ball visions in a recent session during this year's **ASU+GSV Summit**. Moderator Michelle Marks, chancellor of the **University of Colorado Denver**, asked panelists – each representing a unique higher education model – to look forward five years and beyond.

More Embedded Tech as a Given

For Eloy Oakley, chancellor of **California Community Colleges**, the largest system of public education in the country with 116 colleges and more than 2 million

students, teaching and learning will certainly have more embedded technology. “Prior to the pandemic, we had been in a long and sometimes contentious conversation about how we leverage technology more. How do we help our faculty, reach more students, be more effective, gather more data about our students? And of course, there was a lot going on about whether or not we could ever do that,” he said. “Well, here we are. We’ve advanced five years in a matter of five months in the use of technology. And that’s something that we have to hold on to.”

Oakley’s hope is to use the current shift to online



“When you think about what the real responsibility of the university is, it’s to help those people progress in their career. And we know that as we move forward with the changes in technology and the changes in jobs, those careers are going to change over time. The idea that you go to school once when you’re young and you have the skills you need for life — long gone.”

learning as a “steppingstone” to reach more adult learners. “States like California have had such a huge unemployment and underemployment of our adult worker population, and many of those jobs are not coming back. How do we leverage this opportunity to move students along, to help more individuals get back into the economy, and to ensure that our state remains prosperous?” That’s a mission, he added, “that we’ve always been about. The question now is [can we] approach that mission very differently and be able to reach more students?”

More People, Lower Cost

Broader outreach and faster impact will also be at the heart of private liberal arts education too, suggested Carol Quillen, president of **Davidson College**, a 2,000-student, largely residential college outside of Charlotte, NC. “Those of us who are these traditional residential institutions have finally kind of caught up to looking at the challenge that we face as a sector, which is how do we educate more people at a lower cost more quickly and with a clear sense of the value of what we’re doing?” she noted. “In five years, all of us will have a clearer sense of the role that we play in that

broader project and that institutions like Davidson and many others will serve a broader range of learners in very different ways, as we continue to differentiate the sector and strive to ensure equity for all learners.”

Continuous Skilling Beyond Degrees

“Continuous skilling” will play a big role in the college of the future, predicted Peter Cohen, president of the **University of Phoenix**, with 87,000 students, “largely working adults, largely moms with dependents already in their career and looking to get ahead.” While the university is known for its online programs, it also operates 30 campuses around the country serving 5,000 students, all of whom were moved to online classes during the pandemic. “More than 85 percent of students come to the university in order to get a better job or get a better career,” he said. “When you think about what the real responsibility of the university is, it’s to help those people progress in their career. And we know that as we move forward with the changes in technology and the changes in jobs, those careers are going to change over time. The idea that you go to school once when you’re young and you have the skills you need for life – long gone.”



Cohen expects that serving those adult learners will go well beyond degrees: “You might need a certificate or a badge or a competency or skill. I see us and other universities in the future expanding their offerings to be better aligned to what industry is looking for – the sort of bursts of learning that allow people to get those promotions and new jobs that they need.” For that reason, he said, his own institution is “doubling down on the concept of career services, on the idea that we have to serve you pre-enrollment, helping you understand what career might be available for you, giving you the skills you need to get started in that career, continuing to work with you throughout your career in order to get you upskilled until you decide to retire.”

More Systematic Thinking

Ben Nelson embraces a different mandate for higher ed that deflects the emphasis on certifying somebody “to get a job.” Nelson is chairman and CEO of **Minerva**, a global college in which students live in residential settings in one of four international cities (San Francisco, Berlin, London and Seoul) and take all

courses online. “That’s fundamentally flawed logic,” he said, “because the reality is – and we all know this – none of our formal education trained us for the context situations and challenges that we deal with every single day. What trains people to be ready is the learning of wisdom, how to actually encounter a novel situation, a novel context, and draw upon lessons from other areas appropriately.” As he explained, to enable a student “to think systematically means that you not only have to rethink on a radical basis the curricular approach to university but also it means that you have to constantly learn and improve and change it.” For that reason, Nelson said, “Five years from now, I hope that Minerva will be unrecognizable from the Minerva of today, simply because the educational advancement of what we offer will be so radically different.”

Uniquely Equipping Students to “Answer this Moment”

David Thomas, president of **Morehouse College**, showed a similar perspective as Minerva but with a more



Morehouse educates 18- to 23-year-olds “who are in the process of answering fundamental questions of: Who am I? Who can I be in the world? What does the world owe me?” The focus, Thomas said, “has to be on creating citizens.”

pressing undercurrent. Morehouse is an Historically Black College and University, and the largest school in the country “dedicated solely to the education of men.” (Its most well-known graduate was Martin Luther King.) Current enrollment is about 2,200 students. Like Nelson, Thomas observed that a focus on career-readiness loses “the opportunity to shape the values and create a place where students can develop a vision for the kind of world that they want to create.”

Unlike the University of Phoenix with its typical adult learner, Morehouse educates 18- to 23-year-olds “who are in the process of answering fundamental questions of: Who am I? Who can I be in the world? What does the world owe me?” The focus, Thomas said, “has to be on creating citizens.” Morehouse students have been at the forefront of protests and mobilizations around the needs of communities of color around the country, focusing on food insecurity and housing, which is, Thomas said, “very much at the heart of the DNA of Morehouse around nonviolent social advocacy.” Those activities have led to “a reinvigoration of our community and our students’ understanding about how they’re uniquely equipped to answer this moment,” Thomas added.

Yet, where the college hasn’t been focused is on the concept of lifelong learning. “Now that we have had to move into the 21st century and embrace the power of technology to stay in business, [we need] to expand our reach. Given what’s going on in our society, [there are] so many areas where the distinctive values

that Morehouse wraps its education around can be extended as students engage in lifelong learning,” Thomas said. As an example, he mentioned how the National Football League sought a school it could partner with in the wake of the Colin Kaepernick-national anthem controversy, where players and executives could learn about nonviolent social advocacy “to turn that controversy into real change.” The league chose to work with Morehouse. “There are lots of other sectors that are asking those same questions. Now because we can leverage technology, we can take that to the world, along with our programs in business and bioinformatics and all those kinds of things,” he proposed.

Expectations for Change

U Colorado Denver Chancellor Marks pressed panelists to “fast-forward to 2030” and offer thoughts on what they expected and hoped would change or not change, “for better or worse.”

More Partnering

For Morehouse’s Thomas, the answer was simple: partnering with other institutions, “rather than seeing them simply as the competition.” As he explained, “For small liberal arts colleges like mine, we will have reckoned with the fact that by ourselves, we cannot do everything that our students need.” Schools will need to “leverage our various distinctive competencies to create new ways to serve the society that we’re going to enter into,” he said. “[For] the world we’re moving



into, half the jobs that exist today won't exist by 2050, and we don't know what the new ones will be. Coming together to address that will aid us."

Education as a Public Good

Davidson's Quillen said she hopes to see broader consensus on the belief "that education is a public good, for which we all bear some responsibility." That will probably require a change in the relationship between how the federal government and higher ed interacts. That "could go either way," she noted. What Quillen hopes never changes is the "inherent and often-mocked idea that education is actually liberating. Education is about developing in people skills that are transferable precisely because they derive from the cultivation of deeply human capacities which we all share." As she asserted, "We will lose the power of education and learning as liberating if we succumb to the idea that it's always about the next job."

Lower Cost and Greater Focus on Outcomes

U Phoenix's Cohen said his hope is twofold: that the cost of tuition will come down and that institutions will be judged not on "their tax status" but "on their outcomes." "If you leverage technology, whether it's on the student side [with] artificial intelligence or around the back-office side with robotic process automation, you can lower the cost of education, to allow it to be affordable for more people." As a result, he noted, "You won't have to rely on the federal government subsidies as much as we do today."

"You look at most curricula at most universities — they're exactly the same The fundamental approaches, the sequences of courses are not only the same, they're also curated the same." Because of that, Cohen suggested, "the degradation of rigor which has been occurring for 50 years will continue to accelerate."

Need to Shift Away from "Monoculture" Ed

Minerva's Cohen cautioned against a "society of monoculture education," where national governments "dictate what's to be learned." In spite of the diversity of educational models in higher ed, that's exactly what he thinks will happen. "We are actually self-homogenizing as a sector," he said. "You look at most curricula at most universities — they're exactly the same The fundamental approaches, the sequences of courses are not only the same, they're also curated the same." Because of that, he suggested, "the degradation of rigor which has been occurring for 50 years will continue to accelerate." Cohen's hope is that a decade from now a growing number of institutions "will stand against those trends, will have very distinct educational philosophies with a well-thought-through curriculum of extraordinarily high academic rigor that will focus on actual learning outcomes."

Finding Access Everywhere

California Community Colleges' Oakley had the last word: that democratization in access to education will win out. "Things like the degree will no longer hold sway," he said. "Competencies, opportunities will hold power. And so that's going to force us in higher education to rethink how we're organized [and] what we value." His hope: "that we will be talking about how every person on the planet has access to what we have to offer today."

*Dian Schaffhauser is content editor for **Campus Technology**.*



Educause Identifies Top IT Issues for an Uncertain Future

The association for information technology professionals in higher education has taken a different approach to its annual report on the top issues in IT: laying out possible scenarios for emerging from the pandemic over the coming year. **BY DIAN SCHAFFHAUSER**

EACH YEAR EDUCAUSE RELEASES A REPORT examining what its members consider the **top 10 issues in IT** for the coming year. This year, however, members – IT leaders and professionals in higher education – faced a quandary: Nobody knows what 2021 will look like because COVID-19 is holding all of us hostage for the foreseeable future. So the organization took a new approach. As Susan Grajek, vice president of communities and research, explained in this year's **Educause annual conference**, the research project laid out three possible scenarios for how colleges and universities “might emerge” from the pandemic next year:

Restore: meaning the school would focus on survival, how to get back to where it was prior to the pandemic.

Evolve: meaning it would focus on “adapting to the new normal.”

Transform: meaning it would take “an active role” in innovating its approach to higher education.

Those scenarios generated three lists of top IT issues instead of one; but each list was limited to five issues instead of 10. The report is available **on the Educause website**.

Some things didn't change. As usual, a roster of expert panelists, both IT and non-IT, identified the top IT issues for the coming year. That part of the process was no different from previous years, when the panelists pick

	Restore ↘	Evolve ↗	← Transform →
1	Cost Management Reducing institutional costs and increasing workforce efficiency	Student Success Advancing student support services to help students attain academic and career goals	Institutional Culture Contributing to a culture of transformation
2	Online Learning Strengthening online and hybrid education	Equitable Access to Education Providing technologies, support, and policies for diverse users	Technology Alignment Identifying and applying sustainable digital strategies and innovations
3	Financial Health Revising budget models and IT governance	Online Learning Progressing from emergency remote teaching to online learning	Technology Strategy Developing an enterprise architecture that keeps pace with strategic change
4	Affordability & Digital Equity Providing increased support for students' technology needs and enabling technology availability	Information Security Developing a cybersecurity operations strategy	Enrollment & Recruitment Exploring and implementing creative holistic recruitment solutions
5	Information Security Providing information security leadership	Financial Health Partnering to develop new funding sources	Cost Management Focusing on digital transformation

EDUCAUSE'S 2021 "TOP IT ISSUES" FELL INTO THREE SCENARIOS: RESTORE, EVOLVE AND TRANSFORM. SOURCE: "TOP IT ISSUES 2021: EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC."



Grajek commented on two issues “that came up again and again in the panels.” The first was diversity, equity and inclusion, a set of concerns that “hint at IT affordability and digital equity in the Restore scenario and equitable access to education in the Evolve scenario.”

out 15 to 20 issues for members to vote on. But this year, the experts created three versions of each issue list, one for each scenario. Then Educause surveyed members on those three lists to come up with the top five issues for each.

The research project also worked under three assumptions:

Assumption 1: that vaccines would become available and the pandemic would start “to resolve” during 2021.

Assumption 2: the scenarios would be “high-level” and “very general,” to accommodate school variation in culture, vision and business model.

Assumption 3: one outcome probably wouldn’t wholly fit any single institution; a school’s financial health might follow one scenario while its academic work might follow another.

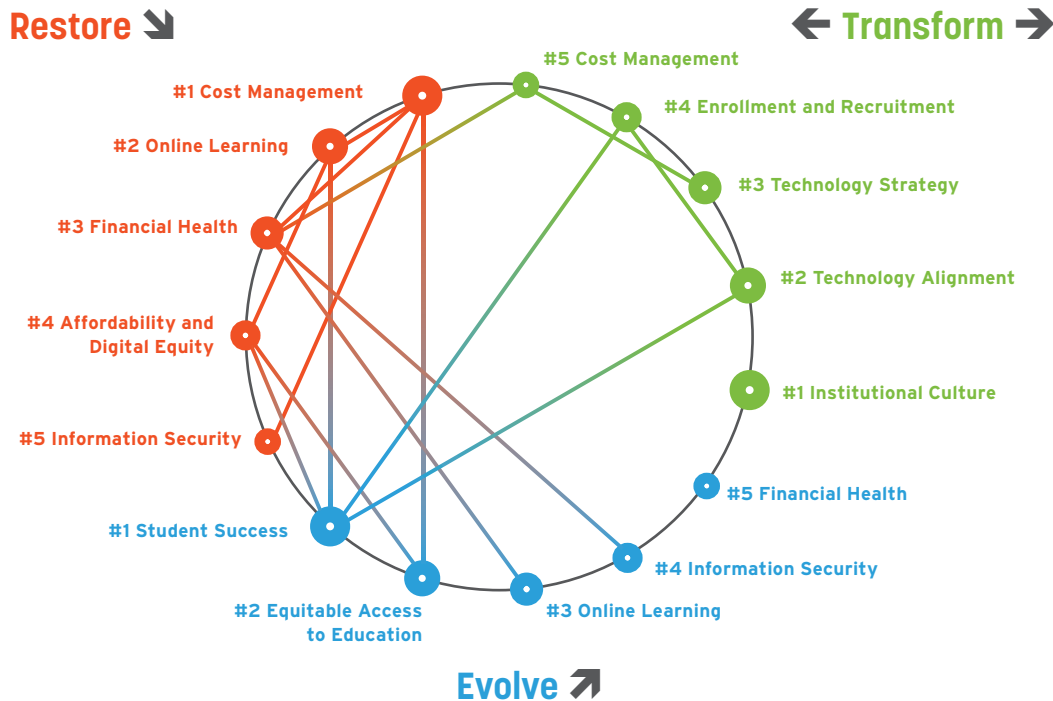
Many of the issues overlap from one scenario to another. As Grajek pointed out, the “Restore” and “Evolve” outcomes share four issues in common. But the details are different. For example, while information security showed up on both Restore and Evolve lists, for Restore, the issue of security “is qualified by the need to be budget conscious,” she noted, and more tactically-minded. The concerns in the Evolve list are focused on developing a more strategic approach to cybersecurity and expands the scope to encompass off-campus security protection too.

Likewise, while online learning appeared as an issue on both lists, in survival mode (Restore), the emphasis is on dealing with the emergency of “remote teaching” and follows a more structural approach that focuses on “supports, processes and policies.” In the adaptation mode (Evolve), the quality of online learning takes on more importance.

The Transform issues, on the other hand, were more unique to that scenario, with one exception: “Cost Management” appeared in both the Restore and the Transform lists. But while the Restore version of cost management emphasized the reduction of institutional costs and doing more with less, under Transform, cost management was focused on digital transformation, “to increase agility and reduce redundancy,” as Grajek stated.

Educause used correlation analysis to uncover the connections among members’ choices within and across issues in the scenarios. As Grajek explained, those who rated the Restore version of the cost management issue especially high (or low) for their institutions were far more likely also to rate the Evolve version of equitable access to education high or low. The same was true between Restore’s online learning and Evolve’s student success.

Grajek commented on two issues “that came up again and again in the panels.” The first was diversity, equity and inclusion, a set of concerns that “hint at IT affordability and digital equity in the Restore scenario and equitable access to education in the Evolve scenario.” According



EDUCAUSE IDENTIFIED INTERCONNECTIONS AMONG THE TOP IT ISSUES ACROSS THE THREE SCENARIOS. SOURCE: "TOP IT ISSUES 2021: EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC."

to the experts, diversity, equity and inclusion were so important, they "[transcend] all the themes" and take multiple forms: "ensuring equity of access and outcomes for higher education, having a workforce that's diverse in many, many ways and that can reflect the diversity of our students and faculty and foster inclusion so no one feels marginalized or maltreated." As Grajek noted, "We need to keep these basic human rights in mind and in deed, as we lead and manage technology professionals and as we work with and support students, staff, faculty and the communities that we work in."

The second issue that may not have appeared in the roster but still permeates everything IT does right now, said Grajek, is burnout. "We all feel it, and there's no time that things will slow or ease up."

In a short video clip David Seidl, vice president for IT and CIO at Ohio's **Miami University**, referred to the problem of burnout as an "existential struggle." "A lot of institutions are going to be fighting an existential struggle before they fight a making-things-better struggle, and we're seeing it already across our state," he said. Even though he reminds his staff to treat

the current job as a "marathon," it's hard for them to remember that, because "we keep running into things that we need to sprint for."

While there's no easy antidote to either of those broad challenges, Grajek reminded the audience, what schools need to remember is that the pandemic has brought opportunity too. "COVID has vaulted us several years ahead in digital transformation, the adoption of online learning, the need to replace business models, public scrutiny of the cost and value of higher education and agility in decision-making," she said. And while there's nothing new about "racial injustice, our current political polarization and the unfair and uneven impact of the pandemic on people of different ethnicities and means," the current crisis has shined "a harsh light on our challenges." In 2021, she concluded, colleges and universities need to "align with a new clarity of purpose and sense of urgency ... answer the difficult questions and start moving forward to emerge from this pandemic, by restoring, evolving and transforming."

Dian Schaffhauser is content editor for **Campus Technology**.



15 Trends Shaping the Future of Higher Education

The Educause 2020 Horizon Report has identified 15 social, technological, higher education and political trends that are influencing teaching and learning in higher ed today — and will have a lasting impact on tomorrow. **BY RHEA KELLY**

“ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE IS HUMAN NATURE

Anticipating the future is risky Anticipating the future is necessary.” Those bold statements opened the latest **Educause Horizon Report**, an annual forecast and analysis of education technology trends in higher education. Its goal: “to inform decision makers and help learners, instructors, and leaders think more deeply about the educational technology choices they are making and their reasons for doing so.”

For more than a decade, the Horizon Report organized its predictions according to an adoption timeline: time-to-adoption of one year or less; time-to-adoption of two to three years; and time-to-adoption of four-to-five years. The 2020 report has broken from that format, in the “first major revision of the report’s methodology, structure, and content.” It cited criticism of the report’s prediction track record (see, for example, **The Horizon Never Moves**” from **Hack Education**), moving away



from the time-to-adoption structure while recognizing that “our thoughts about the future are rooted in the present and how it has changed from the past.” The result: a focus on the evidence, data and scenarios behind the ed tech trends that will inform decision-making today and in the future.

The 2020 report named 15 trends across five categories: social, technological, economic, higher education, and political. In the social sphere:

In the social sphere:

1 | Well-Being and Mental Health. Colleges and universities “need to support the increasing numbers of students who report experiencing anxiety, depression, and related concerns,” the report said. “Faculty and administrators will need to navigate more frequent encounters with students seeking well-being and mental health help, since students who do not have effective intervention services or treatment available to them will likely be less successful in academic and social activities.”

2 | Demographic Changes. These shifts are “leading to a new outlook on how higher education must serve students in the future.” In particular, “increasing numbers of nontraditional students and changes in the concept of the ‘typical’ student will continue to force institutions to consider alternative approaches to higher education.”

3 | Equity and Fair Practices. Here, the report pointed to the increasing prevalence of equity and diversity goals, including institutional goals for equity completion outcomes that are tied to funding.

In the technological category:

4 | Artificial Intelligence: Technology Implications. The report predicted that AI will increasingly be used “by human instructors for providing feedback on student work and for helping with other ‘virtual teaching assistant’ applications,” noting that the technology “may also have applications for refining language translation and for improving access for students with visual or hearing impairments.

5 | Next-Generation Digital Learning Environment. The NGDLE is “creating a

transformational shift in how institutions architect their learning ecosystems for learners and instructors,” with an emphasis on open standards, the report said. As a result, both learners and instructors will have more freedom to experiment with new approaches to education.

6 | Analytics and Privacy Questions. The growth of analytics in higher education has, in turn, led to student privacy becoming an increasingly important consideration. Here, the report advised that “institutions will need to be more proactive in protecting student and employee data and must make careful decisions around partnerships and data exchanges with other organizations, vendors, and governments.”

In the economic category:

7 | Cost of Higher Education. Of note here: rising tuition costs, decreased funding from public and other sources, and expanding student debt, the report said. “Institutions need to demonstrate their value and/or adjust to economic realities with new business/funding models.”

8 | Future of Work and Skills. “Institutions will need to adjust their courses, curricula, and degree programs to meet learners’ needs, as well as the demands of new industries and an evolving workforce,” the report asserted.

9 | Climate Change. Here, the report predicted that “sustainable living and learning will become a higher priority for higher education institutions,” with more institutions focusing on online learning.

In the higher education category:

10 | Changes in Student Population. Dropping college enrollment rates combined with increased student diversity “requires institutional leaders to rethink how to achieve their teaching and learning missions and will demand a new emphasis on holistic student success,” the report noted.

11 | Alternative Pathways to Education. Among the new learning models that institutions will have to contend with: nano- and micro-degrees, competency-based programs, expanded online options, portable



Differing political worldviews are leading to heightened tension on campus, but perhaps more important for institutions in the United States, “legislation that could benefit higher education will become more difficult to pass through an intensely polarized Congress and entrenched political positions.”

and standards-based credentials, and institutional collaboration and partnerships, the report said.

12 | Online Education. “Online education is increasingly seen as a scalable means to provide courses to an increasingly nontraditional student population,” the report said. That means faculty “must be prepared to teach in online, blended, and face-to-face modes.”

And in the political category:

13 | Decrease in Higher Education Funding. In the face of this trend, institutions will need to pursue alternative business and funding models, the report said, such as “privatization of the industry, microcredentialing, establishing partnerships with other industries or organizations, and other more sustainable models.”

14 | Value of Higher Education. Public perceptions of the value of a college education are varied. “As overall enrollments continue to decline, institutions will be forced to identify alternative education or business

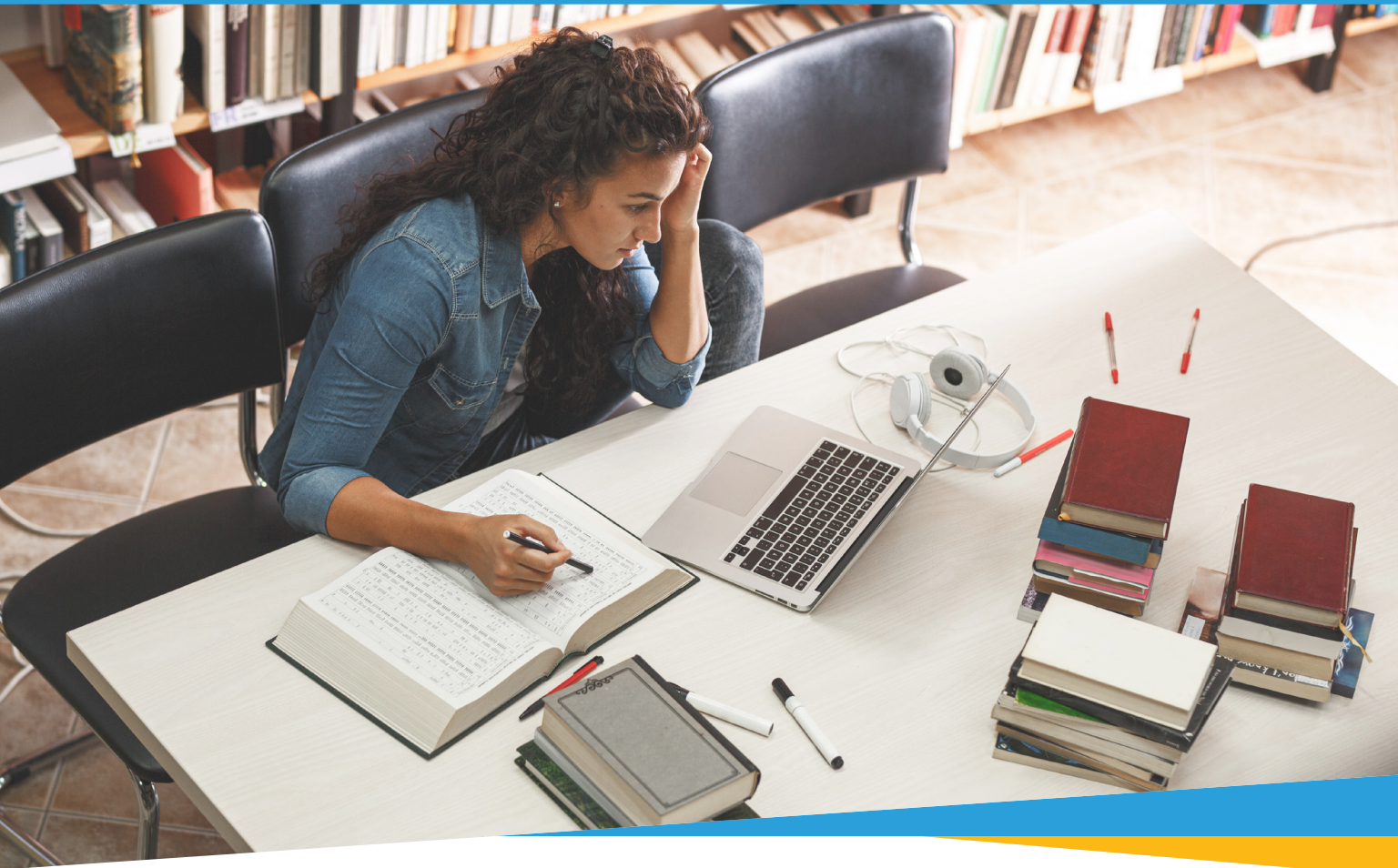
models,” the report noted.

15 | Political Polarization. Differing political worldviews are leading to heightened tension on campus, but perhaps more important for institutions in the United States, “legislation that could benefit higher education will become more difficult to pass through an intensely polarized Congress and entrenched political positions.”

Ultimately, keeping track of these big-picture developments is key to navigating the future of teaching and learning. After all, the report said, “Teaching and learning doesn’t take place in a vacuum ... and understanding the trajectories of such large-scale trends can only help decision makers and professionals build more responsive and sustainable environments and practices at their institutions.”

The full report, including analysis of each trend’s impacts along with supporting evidence and links to further reading, is available on the **Educause site**.

*Rhea Kelly is executive editor for **Campus Technology**.*



Mental Health, Institutional Finances Top of Mind for University Presidents

In a survey from the American Council on Education, presidents reported the top concerns for their institutions in the fall semester. **BY RHEA KELLY**

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE MOST PRESSING ISSUE on their campuses, college and university presidents in a recent survey deemed the mental health of students their top concern (cited by 53 percent of respondents). That was followed by long-term financial viability (43 percent), mental health of faculty and staff (42 percent), enrollment numbers for the spring (39 percent) and sustaining an online learning environment (30 percent).

Those results come out of the latest **Pulse Point** survey from the **American Council on**

Education (ACE). The organization polled 295 presidents about their concerns and fall reopening plans, as well as their institution's fall enrollment and financial health.

More than half of respondents (55 percent) described their institution's primary mode of instruction for fall as "predominantly online, with some in-person instruction." Thirty-two percent said their institution was "predominantly in-person, with some online instruction"; 10 percent were fully online; and just 2



The most common COVID-19 safety measures:

- 96% Face coverings
- 88% PPE for faculty and staff
- 87% Reduced class sizes
- 83% Limitations on employee travel
- 81% Reduced building capacities
- 80% Reduced capacity at events
- 79% PPE for students
- 79% Contact tracing protocols

percent were exclusively in-person. While respondents cited a variety of factors behind the choice of instructional mode, nearly all said they prioritized metrics related to physical health and safety.

The survey also asked what COVID-19 safety measures were in place at respondents' institutions. The most common were: face coverings required on campus (cited by 96 percent of respondents), PPE provided to faculty and staff (88 percent), reduced class sizes for social distancing (87 percent), limitations on faculty and staff travel (83 percent), reduced building capacities (81 percent), limited or reduced capacity at on-campus events (80 percent), PPE provided to students (79 percent) and contact tracing protocols (79 percent).

Despite those precautions, many institutions have taken an enrollment hit this fall. Fifty-five percent of overall survey respondents said their institution's fall enrollment has decreased compared to last year. In particular, presidents at public two-year institutions (79 percent) were the most likely to report an enrollment decrease, followed by presidents at public four-year institutions (52 percent) and presidents at private four-year institutions (48 percent), the survey report noted. The main reasons behind the decline: drops in international student enrollment, shifting

from in-person instruction to remote teaching and learning, individual financial hardships, increased familial responsibilities, and health concerns related to COVID-19, according to respondents.

On the flip side, 22 percent of presidents reported an increase in enrollment for the fall. The most common explanations referenced by respondents: the use of strategic enrollment management tools, increasing the availability of student financial aid, discounting tuition and fees for the fall, the expansion of online class offerings, and the institution's ability to serve unique student populations.

When it comes to the pandemic's financial impact on institutions, presidents reported a variety of challenges. The majority of respondents cited increases in expenses such as technology, cleaning and maintenance, student financial aid, support services and instruction, while at the same time noting decreases in revenues from special programs, auxiliaries, room and board, endowment earnings and gifts. Hiring and salary freezes, renegotiated contracts, employee layoffs and furloughs, and early retirement incentives were all in play as cost-cutting measures.

The full report is available on the ACE site.



5 Ways to Deliver High-Quality, Equitable Digital Learning Experiences

A report from Every Learner Everywhere and Tyton Partners recommends five ways higher ed institutions can more equitably serve students. **BY RHEA KELLY**

A GROWING NUMBER OF FACULTY ARE FEELING positive about online learning at their institutions, according to a report from **Every Learner**

Everywhere and **Tyton Partners**. The organizations recently surveyed more than 3,500 faculty at 1,500-plus higher education institutions across the United States about their challenges and concerns as they prepared their courses for the fall semester.

More than 90 percent of respondents are teaching at least one online or hybrid course this fall, and 60 percent have integrated new digital tools. And just 21

percent feel that online learning is not an effective method of instruction, down from 31 percent in May.

Still, the COVID-19 pandemic has widened equity and access gaps across higher education, the survey noted. Two-thirds of faculty respondents said they were concerned about equity among students at their institution, with many calling out “inadequate institutional responses to address equity gaps in a systemic way.”

The report recommended five ways that institutions



can ensure they are delivering high-quality digital learning experiences for all students:

1 | Build on the momentum of the current moment to improve your approach to online and hybrid instruction.

At four-year institutions, 45 percent of faculty surveyed said that their institutions are creating an ideal digital learning environment for the fall semester – a 13 percent jump since May and a 17 percent increase from before the COVID-19 pandemic. Optimism is even higher in two-year institutions: 57 percent of faculty there said their school is achieving an ideal environment, representing a 19 percent jump from May and a 23 percent jump from pre-COVID times. Institutions that take advantage of faculty members' positive outlook and "move beyond band-aids to scaled approaches to delivering high-quality online learning via professional development, infrastructure, and assessment will be best positioned for a more digital future," the report asserted.

2 | Evaluate the impact of digital learning on different student populations.

"Equity remains a systemic and major concern for faculty as they plan instruction and rely on institution-wide support services and proactive advising models," the report said. Forty-six percent of faculty overall reported reduced enrollment at their institutions. What's more, 63 percent of faculty at two-year institutions predicted a decline – "a concerning trend for the higher numbers of low-income and students of color that these institutions serve," the report pointed out, suggesting that "regular monitoring and analysis of both learning analytics and retention analytics are critical steps in identifying gaps and working to close them."

3 | Provide faculty training on implementing digital tools and pedagogy effectively.

According to the survey, faculty are looking for strategies for scaling student engagement and one-on-one interventions, as well as discipline-specific tactics, techniques and best practices.

4 | Make sure students have the tools and preparation needed to learn online.

Faculty in the survey stressed that students "continue to need guidance and resources in

45% of faculty surveyed said that their institutions are creating an ideal digital learning environment

46% of faculty overall reported reduced enrollment at their institutions

63% of faculty at two-year institutions predicted a decline

order to be effective learners online." The report's recommendation: "the development of consistent institutional approaches to course design and the use of common platforms and tools," as well as "direct-to-student training on time management, course expectations, and success strategies."

5 | Assess your digital learning infrastructure and business model.

"Transitioning to a future with more digital instruction requires transformation of existing business models, institutional policies, and practices," the report asserted. Consider the IT, instructional design and professional development that need to be in place in order to achieve the best student experience.

"We are seeing significant momentum and adoption of new digital tools and evidence-based online teaching practices as a result of the pandemic-driven shift to online learning," said Kristen Fox, director at Tyton Partners and lead report author, in a statement. "However, as a field, we need to make sure that we are designing courses and implementing tools in conjunction with institutional practices and policies that effectively reach all students and close gaps."

The full report is available on the **Every Learner Everywhere** and **Tyton Partners** sites.

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