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—Eric Weiss, executive editor

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LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Enhancing mission, vision, reach and impact—through mergers

For these two small higher ed institutions in New Hampshire, the synergy was clear and the outcomes positive

By Michele D. Perkins

The news today is filled with stories of colleges exploring mergers and acquisitions. Reasons vary: Some colleges seek to shore up finances, build their reputation or grow enrollment. Others, including my institution, New England College, view mergers as a proactive strategy—an effective way to enhance mission, vision, reach and impact.

I recently oversaw the completion of a successful merger between NEC, a small college in Henniker, New Hampshire, and the New Hampshire Institute of Art, located in Manchester, New Hampshire. The merger worked because it represented a partnership that benefitted the institutions and those we serve, in tangible, measurable and enduring ways.

Promising partners

NEC, a private nonprofit institution founded in 1946, focuses on liberal arts, with an emphasis on experiential learning. It enrolls about 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students per year.

Founded in 1898, NHIA was the oldest and largest nonprofit arts institution in the state. Enrolling about 300 full-time students annually, it offered undergraduate, graduate and community education programs in art, design and writing.

We identified NHIA as a promising partner because its academic offerings complemented NEC’s curriculum, while its location helped reinforce our presence in one of New England’s largest cities. Affiliation with NEC was an advantage for NHIA, allowing for broader student recruitment. And because of proximity, a merger offered the opportunity for shared resources, consolidations and greater efficiencies. The synergy was clear.

This fall’s incoming class met enrollment and budget goals: anticipated growth for the Institute of Art and Design and a record-level incoming class for NEC.

Coming together

Both institutions worked closely, candidly and cooperatively throughout the process, which began in October 2017 and culminated in a memorandum of understanding in May 2018. The merger completed in July 2019. NHIA was rebranded as the Institute of Art and Design at New England College, and in September, we welcomed our first joint cohort of new students.

We developed a plan that would benefit and support students, faculty, staff and alumni. We addressed academic offerings, accreditation, enrollment, operations, human resources, finances and student services; worked to create one cohesive academic community; and kept both our key constituents and our broader communities informed and engaged. Although not all employees remained, the large majority continued in their jobs.

Most important, the colleges’ boards shared my belief that the union of two distinctive institutions would contribute to the short- and long-term success of our students. To date, we have merged our academic calendars and aligned our credit system. Students regularly participate in events held on both sites.

While some traditions at the acquired institution cannot be maintained, they must be recognized. This spring, the Institute at Art and Design will hold commencement in Manchester. Going forward, we will hold one commencement in Henniker.

Stronger, more sustainable

As we discover what works and what no longer makes sense, more changes will occur. We will maximize space, leverage locations and explore new academic programs to meet community workforce needs. And the original vision—by combining, we become stronger and more sustainable—becomes a reality.

ABOUT MICHELE D. PERKINS:

Michele D. Perkins is president of New England College in New Hampshire. Since her 2007 appointment, she has been credited with tripling enrollment; expanding on-site and online programming; guiding the successful merger with the New Hampshire Institute of Art in Manchester; initiating NEC’s first capital campaign, which is expected to conclude at over $41 million and far exceed its initial goal; and overseeing plans for major campus construction projects, including The John Lyons Center (2016), the recently opened Rosemond Page Putnam Center for the Performing Arts, and an athletic complex that is anticipated to debut in 2022.
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Admissions ethics code now allows ‘student poaching’

Enrollment management administrators rethinking student recruitment strategies

Should our college get more aggressive in signing on new students? It’s a question being discussed after the National Association for College Admission Counseling recently revised its Code of Ethics and Professional Practices.

Higher ed institutions can now offer exclusive incentives for early decision, recruit first-year undergrads who have committed elsewhere and recruit transfer students, according to the code. The changes came after pressure from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Increased competition means needing to work harder to keep incoming freshmen and currently enrolled students engaged, according to EAB, which recently surveyed enrollment leaders at 150 schools on the guideline changes.

More vulnerable institutions and smaller schools may show a greater inclination to try the previously prohibited practices, says Madeleine Rhyneer, vice president of consulting services and dean of enrollment management at EAB and a former enrollment officer. “If this were a world where the market was more right-sized, the change in rules would have less of an impact.”

A game of ‘enrollment chicken’

Sarah Kelly at Loyola University New Orleans has described this new normal to colleagues and the board as “a really big game of ‘enrollment chicken.’”

“Many seasoned enrollment managers are concerned about being the first out of the gate to fence jump, yet we are also critically concerned about protecting our campuses in this time of demographic shifts and declines. None of us wants to give our competitors the edge,” says Kelly, senior vice president of enrollment, marketing and student affairs.

A separate 2019 EAB survey of 2,000 college freshmen showed that students would consider transferring to another institution to which they had previously applied, citing cost reduction (34%) and full transfer of credits (28%) as among the top incentives.

“Students typically leave institutions for a few reasons: better prestige, more aid/lower costs or more convenience,” says Kelly. “A concern of mine—and of many of my enrollment colleagues—is that some students will make decisions based on net price, at the expense of other factors. ... Helping students see the big picture is really important.”

Taking student recruitment (and retention) actions

So far, many enrollment leaders are taking a wait-and-see approach on the new recruitment tactics.

“While schools do compete for students, we are collegial and professional, and the reputation of how our institution conducts business really matters,”
A low majority of faculty prefer using digital course materials and that number is only slowly increasing, according to a report by OnCampus Research, the research arm of the National Association of College Stores. Meanwhile, many professors do not know how to use their course materials.

The report identified attitudes and behaviors of faculty toward course materials at 21 higher ed institutions. Most notably, authors found that nearly half (49%) of professors prefer print materials.

“It’s important for professors to embrace more technology because students are digital natives now. That’s what they understand,” says Jason Webb of Syracuse University in New York, who is leading two sessions in the instructional technology track at UB Tech® 2020. “People are wary of course materials because their prices are getting higher as the number of manufacturers continues to shrink, but the accessibility of learning management systems should be making this easier,” adds Webb, an instructional analyst who helps faculty create video content for online, flipped and hybrid classes.

Supporting faculty in using tech
In the last three years, Syracuse has overhauled instructional technology accessibility issues to address student learning styles. “We have a studio where we help faculty become better storytellers and make their classes more engaging than just a voice over a PowerPoint that lasts 40 minutes,” says Webb. “We came up with a pathway similar to gamification where you can use multiple options for students to learn and engage with.”

The process of obtaining faculty buy-in can be a slow process. This includes identifying what technologies students are using and gaining feedback from professors.

“We had a faculty member who was moving his class online and thought it would be a piece of cake,” says Webb. “He planned on throwing up some Powerpoints, a few discussion boards and maybe one or two short papers.” Webb helped the professor add more digital technology to his course. “The professor found out he was working a lot harder than an in-person class,” says Webb. “We asked how he felt about that and he said, ‘I would do it all again, a thousand times more.’” —Steven Blackburn

16%

—Faculty who prefer teaching with digital e-books, or digital books with additional digital components (such as adaptive learning and quizzes)

Source: “Faculty Watch Attitudes and Behaviors toward Course Materials 2018-2019 Report,” OnCampus Research division of National Association of College Stores, UBmag.me/facultywatch
SAFETY
Coronavirus concerns cancel study abroad programs

As the threat of coronavirus became more likely throughout February and early March, a number of U.S. colleges and universities suspended study abroad programs in China, Italy and elsewhere. A few examples:

- **Fairfield University** closed its Florence University of the Arts study abroad session. The program’s 142 students are finishing the school year on its main campus in Connecticut or online.
- Students in Connecticut’s 17-school state college and university system were ordered to return from China, South Korea, Iran, Italy and Japan. All future travel to those countries was canceled.
- The University of Tennessee suspended spring and summer programs in China, South Korea and Italy.

Many institutions are also requesting that the students self-quarantine upon their return to the states.

- Three University of California, Davis students, who hadn’t traveled abroad but were exposed to coronavirus, were isolated for 14 days and eventually allowed to return to normal activity.

UC Davis, like many other institutions, requires its international business travelers to register ahead of time. The institution’s travel security manager reports that individuals who had planned to travel to China or South Korea have canceled their trips.

In early March, **Cornell University** updated its travel policies, consistent with direction from the state health department, to require that all students, faculty and staff returning from a CDC Level 3 affected area, as well as Japan, undergo quarantine of at least 14 days.

Students with “extraordinary, extenuating circumstances” needing to return to Ithaca immediately would be provided an off-campus place to be quarantined.

—UB staff

**Higher ed response to coronavirus**

Colleges and universities across the country are:

- Updating plans to be implemented in case of exposure to the virus
- Creating coronavirus news websites to provide up-to-date information
- Using resources—including in some cases students in public health programs—to help keep communities informed

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**INDUSTRY NEWS**

**Fairmont State University** (W.Va.) and **Kentucky Wesleyan College** recently opened 24-hour cashless markets from culinary management company **Aladdin** on their campuses. Meanwhile, **Wheeling University** (W.Va) awarded a food and beverage contract to Aladdin that began in January. All three institutions use Aladdin’s plant-based menu and digital signage that posts real-time information to assist people with food allergies and preferences.

**Michigan State University** will launch its first coding boot camp for adult learners in June with **Trilogy Education**. In the 24-week, part-time program, students will spend 20 hours per week on projects, homework and experiential learning activities. In addition, they will receive a range of career-planning services, portfolio reviews, recruiting assistance and staff support.

**Harper College** (Ill.) has selected three **Oracle** cloud-based applications to help break down silos, embrace new innovations, and improve user engagement, collaboration and performance. Oracle’s ERP and EPM systems will allow the community college to accurately and efficiently process financial information, track project statuses and identify patterns in operational and financial data. The HCM system will help improve the workplace experience for employees, candidates and HR professionals.

**Purdue University** (Ind.) and **Aprecia Pharmaceuticals** are advancing the science and technology of three-dimensionally printed (3DP) pharmaceutical equipment and medications. Faculty and students will work with Aprecia researchers and have access to 3DP technology through research projects, internships and joint collaborations. —**Steven Blackburn**
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Is gender gap closing for grads choosing the most lucrative college majors?

As women move in growing numbers into more lucrative college majors, such as accounting and biology, companies that achieve income equality between male and female employees will “come out ahead,” say a team of researchers analyzing current labor conditions.

Because the pay gap becomes most obvious at the time female employees begin having children—and the fact that the number of college-educated women will soon surpass the number of college-educated men in the workforce—businesses will have to figure out ways not to disadvantage women who are starting families, says Dan Black, a professor at the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy.

“This is evidence that women are suffering for taking on the primary child-care responsibilities,” says Black, who is part of a team developing a working paper that traces labor market outcomes back what majors women choose in college. “There’s been considerable progress but we still have a long way to go.”

Among the notable shifts in college majors, women now represent the majority of graduates with accounting degrees. On the other hand, engineering remains dominated by male students, Black says. “That’s one that has been particularly stubborn. Also, there has been less progress in physics than there has been in biology.”

Overall, women are now choosing to major in fields that are more lucrative in the professional world, says Black, who is conducting his research with University of Chicago professor Erik Hurst and University of California professor Carolyn Sloane.

“Women seem to have a much more focused view of labor markets in terms of wanting to go into occupations where they can actually earn incomes in ways similar to men,” Black says.

Another public policy ramification is that women are moving away from less lucrative fields, such as education, which could put further pressure on public schools dealing with teacher shortages.

—Matt Zalaznick

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Beyond the News

FACILITIES

How four colleges teamed up to buy solar power

Four Pennsylvania schools will reach carbon neutrality together, thanks to a purchasing collective they’ve formed to buy solar power.

Dickinson College, Lehigh University, Lafayette College and Muhlenberg College will purchase the largest amount of solar power of any group of independent colleges in the nation, according to a statement released by the schools.

This year, Dickinson achieved its carbon neutrality goal, but we can’t stop there,” Dickinson College President Margee M. Ensign said. “Colleges and universities must continue innovating and leading in this area.”

The 45.9 megawatts of power the schools will buy will prevent over 70,000 metric tons of carbon emissions each year—equivalent to removing over 15,000 cars from the road. The institutions will also have access to real-time data from the solar farm for research purposes.

“This is a momentous step that helps move us toward our 2035 carbon neutrality goal,” said Lafayette College President Alison Byerly. “This effort alone will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 47% as we continue to explore energy conservation initiatives.”

About 40 of the nation’s approximately 4,200 colleges and universities that have launched large-scale renewable energy projects in recent years, says Kristine Yahna Todaro, Muhlenberg’s director of news & media relations.

—Steven Blackburn

Recent campus solar wins

• Earlier this year, Colorado College achieved carbon neutrality, even while increasing its building footprint by more than 10%.
• In April 2019, Colgate University in New York reduced its net carbon emissions to zero.

PEOPLE WATCH

David Cho, previously of BlackRock, an asset management firm, is now chief procurement officer of the University of Massachusetts, leading its new shared services project, the Unified Procurement Services Team (UPST). The effort—which consolidates multiple procurement operations into one single unit—is expected to save the university more than $16 million in administrative costs over the first 12 to 18 months, allowing the system to direct more funds to student financial aid, academic programming and deferred facilities maintenance.

UPST is the most recent step in the university system’s ongoing efficiency and effectiveness program, which officials launched in 2012 to improve services while reducing overall costs.

Other people news:
• Provost Jonathan Holloway of Northwestern University (Ill.) will lead Rutgers University (N.J.), starting in July.
• President Karin Edwards of Portland Community College’s Cascade campus (Ore.) will become president of Clark College (Wash.). Interim President Sandra Fowler-Hill of Clark College is ending her term this summer.
• Col. Mark Anarumo will become president of Norwich University (Vt.) in June. Col. Anarumo currently serves as the director of the Center for Character and Leadership Development at the U.S. Air Force Academy (Colo.).

—Matt Zalaznick

Dickinson College

UniversityBusiness.com
College fundraising tops list of causes supported by the wealthy

College advancement and fundraising rank No. 1 for wealthy families looking for causes to support, beating out health, the environment, and arts and culture, according to a pair of studies just released by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

A growing number of these families are also speeding up the timeline of their gifts so they can see a quicker impact. In the past, these families were more focused on leaving a philanthropic legacy, the studies show.

The reports (UBmag.me/rockefeller) delve into how families around the world involve younger generations in their philanthropy, the vehicles for giving, the top reasons for giving and the impact of time horizons.

Student access to higher education, career readiness, scholarships and faculty support have been among the leading areas philanthropists want to support, with community colleges also receiving increasing focus, says a study released last fall by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and TIAA (UBmag.me/tiaareport).

During the 2019 academic fiscal year, higher education fundraising hit a record $49.6 billion, driven by an increase in donations from organizations and foundations, according to the latest Voluntary Support of Education survey (UBmag.me/voluntary) by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

The bulk of the increase in fundraising from organizations came from a single contribution—Michael Bloomberg’s $1.8 billion gift, through his foundation, to the endowment at Johns Hopkins University, his alma mater. —Matt Zalaznick

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Esports programs: 10 startup steps to know

For higher ed leaders considering esports, research, buy-in, budget and tech are key

By Kelly Walsh

Esports is on a growth path at our colleges and universities, and even in our K-12 school districts. If your higher ed institution is thinking about launching a program, here are 10 considerations to explore and plan for now. Keep in mind that even smaller institutions can tackle an esports program by starting small and expanding.

1. **Do your research.** Administrators must understand competitive multiplayer video gaming and be able to explain to stakeholders why a program launch could be successful. The free *UB Guide to Esports* is a great place to start (UBmag.me/ubtechesguide).

2. **Get buy-in, and assign or hire a coach or program director.** Someone needs to be at the helm. If you are starting small, you may have a volunteer coach oversee it. Later, you can hire a full-time program director. The effort is not going to get off the ground unless someone is in charge and has executive support.

3. **Look into computers and peripherals.** What sorts of computers do you need to run games on? You will definitely want to consult with computer equipment experts and gamers to spec out the right ones. But the simple answer is: high end, with lots of memory and powerful graphics processors. And since technology keeps improving, it is a good idea to look for computers that allow for upgrades. That is one of several reasons desktop models are preferable to laptops. A quality display and specialized mouse are other essentials.

4. **Consider gaming chairs.** Good quality, adjustable-height office chairs can work, but some gamers will swear by pricey gaming chairs.

5. **Review potential accommodations.** This is where things can get quite expensive. But for those interested in starting small, one can designate and set up a room that will serve as both a practice facility and a space for team play. If you outgrow it, the space can remain a fully functional practice room.

6. **Set a budget.** All of the above point to the need for funds. At a minimum, get quotes for gaming computers and peripherals and chairs; identify the room or facility to be used; and then develop a budget for preparing that space and procuring equipment.

7. **Select esports titles.** Consider the longevity of the franchise. You may want to select a title that has been around for a while to help ensure the long-term viability of an esports effort. Also consider acceptable levels of violence and/or suggestiveness. Will stakeholders be comfortable with the options? Many games use ratings such as “Everyone” or “Teen,” set by the Entertainment Software Rating Board. Current popular titles include League of Legends, Overwatch, Hearthstone and Rocket League.

8. **Set up gaming guidelines.** Guidelines set clear expectations regarding student academics, behavior, etc.—and can help with recruitment.

9. **Recruit gamers.** Chances are you already have plenty of gamers on campus; you just need to get the word out. As esports programs grow, many schools recruit gamers with scholarships, too.

10. **Think about joining a collegiate league.** Once you have the above needs in place and have gained experience, consider joining a league. Leagues provide access to resources and communities of gamers, and offer benefits that help with recruitment. There are several out there, including Tespa, Collegiate Starleague and College League of Legends.

Kelly Walsh is CIO of The College of Westchester in New York.
A shared goal for everyone from top campus officials and other administrators on down to faculty, staff, and students at colleges and universities is this: Reduce the institution’s carbon footprint. Campus procurement offices are increasingly playing a big part in getting it done.

Some eco-friendly buys are a no-brainer. But once a college makes the switch to 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper, what’s next?

“Institutions are starting to think more and more comprehensively,” says Monika Urbanski, who led development of the Sustainable Campus Index for the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). “They say, ‘We’ve got the paper challenge addressed—let’s talk about next-level items, like ink.’”

Here are five key actions for deepening sustainability commitments through purchasing.

1. Examine purchasing policy and shift as needed

Even at schools with decentralized procurement, where individual managers are empowered to make their own purchases, general policies should lay out the university’s overall purchasing criteria. As complex as it may be, that whole framework may need to be rebuilt to allow for buying decisions that go beyond “lowest sticker price wins.”

Leaders at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, found they had to build “life-cycle costing language and criteria” into the purchasing policy.

That meant adding a section on sustainability and “best-value purchasing,” taking into account longer-term costs.
taking into account longer-term costs and impacts, says Rochelle Owen, executive director of the Office of Sustainability at the public research university. “We are not held to the lowest cost of capital to purchase something,” Owen says. “If it costs a bit more, but its life cycle is longer, we are able to purchase it.”

Private and religious institutions can look to their missions as they refine their purchasing policies.

At the University of Dayton, a “Catholic, Marianist” institution in Ohio, administrators reflected on their larger goal of serving the common good. By 2019 they arrived at an official procurement policy that notes the “prudent expenditure of funds” up top but goes on to define that more broadly than minimizing spending.

“We added a lot of language that led us to environmentally preferable purchasing and beyond,” says Sara Harrison, executive director of Procurement and Payable Services. “We are tying together sustainable purchasing, supplier diversity, buying local and buying small. Even the preparation of that helped us see how we were unique.”

2. Help everyone to view the procurement office as a resource

Even when consulting the procurement office is considered voluntary, purchasing officers can help others to see them as an authority on how to buy greener. That technique has worked well for Matt Rumpza, director of purchasing and auxiliaries as well as accounts payable at Macalester College in Minnesota, a private liberal arts college enrolling 2,000.

Rumpza has made a point over the past seven years to serve on various committees with sustainability office representatives, allowing good ideas and collaboration to flow. Ideas have seeped from the bottom up, Rumpza says. Even without a centralized mandate, the success rate with using recycled paper stands at 96 percent. And Macalester has been rated highly for its environmental purchasing by industry trackers like AASHE’s Sustainable Campus Index.

Dalhousie administrators think strategically about where to make the biggest impact. The sustainability office determined that facilities is its campuses’ largest purchaser, with around 250 building-renewal projects each year. Leaders sit down together annually to talk about the key 20 or so projects, strategizing about how to minimize their carbon footprint. Sustainability and procurement also generate buy-in by co-hosting monthly lunch-and-learn sessions.

3. Consider green buying for all corners (and walls) of campus

Items like light bulbs are a simple switch-out to energy-efficient LED.
Across a multifaceted campus, areas such as reducing water and waste provide opportunities as well.

And how about a less expected item, like paint?

Portland State University undertook an initiative last year that stood out to AASHE: screening its paint supplier’s ingredients against green-building standards. After doing this, officials were able to get the vendor to remove worst-in-class “red-listed” ingredients, ultimately shifting them to low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints. “An institution leveraged its buying power to get another business to become more sustainable,” Urbanski says.

Another often-unthought-of area: biomass supply. In 2016 Dalhousie developed a statement on how it would procure wood: not clear-cutting mature trees and using waste products such as bark and residue from sawmills. School leaders even added a guideline for how far wood products would be shipped. Virtually any material or supply a college uses can be examined for sustainability this way.

4. Think holistically while partnering strategically

When campus leaders go to, say, buy more local food, they often find that a knot of interrelated challenges has to be untangled first. Emory University in Atlanta had an aggressive local-food-buying goal, but leaders at the 15,000-student institution couldn’t find enough food to serve that met their criteria. What helped: a partnership with the national land-conservation nonprofit Conservation Fund, whose Working Farms Fund provides access to affordable land to new, young or disadvantaged farmers.

Now when Emory makes the commitment to purchase local food from Working Farms Fund operations, participating farmers can use that commitment as bank-loan collateral. The partnership is new and won’t allow the school to meet its local-food goals for several years yet, but Emory leaders are laying groundwork that will pay off for farmers, Atlanta residents and the university community alike, says Kelly Weisinger, assistant director of sustainability initiatives.

Considering water purchasing decisions has led to a greener longer-term partnership at Emory as well.

Officials recently allowed a company to build an on-campus water reclamation facility that collects stormwater and blackwater, cleans it using microorganisms, and sells it back to the university for non-potable applications (utility process water, irrigation and toilet flushing). The company owns and operates the facility and leases the land it sits on for 20 years, when Emory will take over. “There was no cost to us up front, and over time it will reduce our costs as well,” Weisinger says.

5. Avoid greenwashing

At the University of Dayton, procurement leader Harrison works closely with Sustainability Planning and Evaluating Manager Leah Ceperley. Together they examine third-party certifications and ratings systems across different product categories, from well-known designations like Energy Star and Fair Trade to more specialized designations.

They also partner with trusted providers. To a key group of 25-30 “strategic suppliers,” the University of Dayton communicates its priorities, and the companies report back on how sustainably they’re buying. In addition, the providers often come to Harrison and Ceperley with their own ideas and easy solutions for becoming more green. And they connect campus leaders with their own suppliers down the chain.

All of these efforts are important in ensuring that suppliers who talk the talk about sustainable missions actually walk the walk.

Greenwashing is an occupational hazard of the age of climate change, leaders agree. “There’s going to be a risk no matter what. It’s so difficult when you don’t have standard certifications across every commodity,” Harrison says. “But where there are certifications, we use them. We also look it up ourselves, we do audits.”

All in all, greening procurement takes building relationships, Harrison adds. “You end up playing this role of influencer and educator,” she says. “It’s not a dictatorship. People are smart on a university campus. They’re going to make a smart decision if they have the

Lynn Freehill-Maye is a New York-based writer.
Can AI improve how institutions serve students?

Blackboard partnered with University Business to develop and deploy a survey of higher education leaders in the UB audience in January 2020. Nearly 130 respondents participated, describing how artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots could impact their institutions.

**The struggle is real**
All respondents were asked if there were repetitive tasks that they believe could be handled by artificial intelligence (AI), enabling them to do higher-level work. 76% said that they believed AI could handle some or even a significant amount of those tasks.

Respondents were also asked if their institution struggles to keep up with the volume of student inquiries, such as questions about financial aid, admissions or other areas. Some 27% said “Yes, definitely,” while 58% said “Yes, somewhat or at certain times,” and only 16% said “No.” When asked if the majority of student inquiries are repetitive, or essentially asking about the same topics and requiring similar answers, some 87% of respondents answered “Yes.”

**Do you believe that your institution struggles to keep up with the volume of student inquiries (questions about financial aid, admissions, IT, etc.)?**

- 16% No
- 27% Yes, definitely
- 58% Yes, somewhat or at certain times

**Would you say that the majority of student inquiries are repetitive, essentially asking about the same topics and requiring similar answers?**

- 87% Yes
- 13% No
Let’s chat? More institutions exploring AI

In response to the need to address this high volume of repetitive student inquiries, a growing number of institutions are using chatbots, which use AI to provide immediate answers to commonly asked questions. While most of the respondents (75%) answered that their institutions were not currently using chatbots, some 74% percent of them said that chatbots would “probably” or “definitely” be helpful to their students and staff members.

Those respondents who are currently using chatbots in some capacity at their institutions were then asked if this had been helpful to their students and staff members. 22% said “Yes, definitely,” while another 59% said “Yes, somewhat,” for a total of 81% of chatbot users saying this had been helpful.

Is your institution currently using chatbots to respond to student inquiries, providing immediate answers to commonly asked questions?

2% Yes, extensively
23% Yes, in a limited capacity
75% No

Do you believe that using chatbots in this capacity would be helpful to your students and staff members?

11% Yes, definitely
63% Yes, probably
7% No, probably not

"The survey demonstrated that higher education leaders know that AI could be a useful tool, both for them and their students," says Daniel Woodcock, Director of Help Desk Strategy at Blackboard Student Services. “Many institutions struggle to handle a large volume of student inquiries, many of which are repetitive."

"Blackboard Student Services provides a solution, through a chatbot that allows students to receive immediate answers to their most common questions. As a result, students can spend more time on learning, and staff members can focus more energy on strategic initiatives and higher-level work, resulting in greater student and institutional success."

Blackboard Student Services partners with institutions to leverage innovative technologies and services to make measurable and sustainable impacts on the student experience. This leads to increased ROI, better management of costs, and more efficient and strategic use of resources to ensure the long-term success of both the institution and student.

To learn more, go to blackboard.com/studentservices

*Data taken from the survey of UB subscribers, “AI and Student Services,” conducted in January 2020, with 126 respondents participating.
How to ensure social media strategies are a core part of campus emergency notification system processes

EVERYONE, DON'T DRINK THE WATER!—When the campus water supply became contaminated, Ohio University sent out social media messages to alert the public. Additional posts updated the community about what buildings were impacted and when the situation was resolved.
Emergency notification systems that allow campus officials to post and share alerts on social media channels—so people can like, quote and leave comments—expands a college’s audience during live incidents.

And having multiple active channels increases the likelihood people will read them. Students are usually glued to Twitter feeds while parents may check their Facebook accounts first. Yet mass notification systems tend to use emails and texts for quick communication. Additionally, community members and prospective students not signed up to receive emergency messages can still come across social media alerts if, for example, a friend retweets them. Emails and texts are much less likely to be forwarded. And using existing social media accounts for communication during an incident can require pushing out messaging manually.

While beneficial, adding social media strategies to emergency notification processes can be challenging. Following are some successful procedures and policies colleges are using to get the job done.

Connecting with social media
Many emergency notification systems include Facebook and Twitter functionality so schools can automatically push messages from those platforms to the public. But early implementers, such as Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania, just a few years ago had to submit reports to their vendor to prove stakeholders needed social media added to their solution. University officials then manually linked the university’s main Facebook and Twitter profiles to the system. “The process has become easier since then,” says Darcy White, web communication director. “It’s becoming much more of an expected feature.”

Because of these extra steps, higher ed leaders underscore the importance of choosing solutions with built-in social media capabilities. Connecticut College administrators recently adopted a mass notification platform that supports social media because students had requested that connection, but the school is continuing to post social media posts separately for now. “We need to gather our stakeholders first to agree upon what specific actions need to be taken in all possible scenarios so we can move nimbly in the moment,” says Julia Ferrante, executive director of media relations and communications. Currently, a social media strategist manually types in wording from other alert channels in Facebook and Twitter messages to keep the language consistent, says Julia Ferrante, executive director of media relations and communications. “That is an extra step, and turning on the social media capabilities would streamline that process, but we want to be sure that there is a thoughtful process in place to assess whether a social media message is appropriate in each case,” says Ferrante. The social media strategist has the authority to alter wording if necessary.

Changing workflow processes
A few years ago, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte switched to an emergency notification system—rebranded as NinerAlerts—with the social media component activated. Officials then improved administrative procedures. “We started from the ground up by creating new social media accounts and worked with our communications department to understand how to use them,” says Christy Jackson, director of communications for business affairs. “We agreed that these accounts would not send out nonsensical or fluff messaging, so if people received a message from us, they knew it was important.”

Communications officials now use the main university pages to share messages from NinerAlerts accounts, which continue to gain more followers, especially after emergencies.

SHARE: UBmag.me/awareness
SPREADING AWARENESS

At Ohio University, policies concerning scheduled posts have evolved. “If I’m dealing with an emergency, I don’t want a scheduled message from athletics to go out at the same time as my emergency message,” says Carly Leatherwood, senior director of communications services. “We need to pause everything that distracts from emergency communication efforts.”

Going beyond automation
College officials who are comfortable with automating social media alerts still manually create posts for incidents that aren’t “life or death scenarios,” such as messages about weather or canceled classes, says Ryan Yarosh, senior director of media and public Relations of Binghamton University in New York. “I will write the post in

WORDS OF WISDOM

Additional social media strategies from campus communications and emergency management administrators:

“Virtually operation support teams (VOST) are partnerships where nearby institutions monitor each other’s social media accounts. During an incident, we can get so caught up in trying to get out our messages and gather information, so it’s nice to have an extra pair of eyes to monitor what people are saying.”
—Ryan Yarosh, senior director of media and public Relations, Binghamton University, New York

“Make sure you have a written plan to begin with so folks on the team understand their roles and you are not waiting until crisis. Perform tabletop testing by employing all of the different facets of the plan.”
—Carly Leatherwood, senior director of communications services, Ohio University

“We have learned some lessons about the news media following all of the college’s posts, so if an incident happens on campus, media crews will be on their way quickly. Media management plans are now in place.”
—Alisa Pacer, director of emergency management, Johnson County Community College, Kansas

“In an instance where seconds may matter, streamlining the messaging process leads to the quickest response. Even if we have automated scenarios set up for various possible situations, the agent sending the messages would need to trigger five messages instead of, say, two, if the message is longer.”
—Darcy White, director of web communications and development, Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania

“Some emergency notification systems can pull sections of alerts from the National Weather, for example, so our message contains different sections of the original alert. We can tell the system, ‘Pull line 1, 3 and 5 from this message and send it to these methods with this addition.’”
—Chris Gonyar, director of emergency management, UNC Charlotte, North Carolina

PANIC BUTTON—Last year, officials at Binghamton University enhanced their emergency notifications by installing push buttons that hang on the dispatch center wall. Pushing each button automates a response via social media and other channels.

Colleges may create preloaded templates for specific scenarios that only require some tinkering before sending them out. “These templates are about 90% complete so, whomever sends the alert just has to fill in, for example, the date, time, affected building and then send,” says Chris Gonyar, director of emergency management at UNC Charlotte.

Many colleges have policies where the system automatically sends a preloaded generic message for public action and then an official follows up with more details. But not every update during a live situation warrants a new social media message.

In September, a water pipe malfunction contaminated the water supply at Ohio University; students couldn’t brush their teeth, shower or drink tap water. To alert the public, Leatherwood first sent a social media post that drove everyone to the media alert page for details. Later,
she updated the same page, writing that the city was continuing to work on situation. “This didn’t merit a push via our social channels since the status hadn’t really changed,” she says. However, she adds, a follow-up post was warranted about buildings were impacted by the contamination. “It’s really a judgement call.”

Devoting staff to social media
Unlike text and email alerts, many people interact with social media posts, so having a full-time staff member to provide immediate responses is important. “When you are crafting messaging and worried about updating other outlets such as an alert page, it helps having somebody else who can not only focus on what people are asking and giving one-off answers that need to be addressed but can get feedback on your messaging so you can improve immediately,” says Leatherwood.

Monitoring social media can also stop the spread of false information. “If rumors are spreading, we want to put an end to those as quickly as possible to make sure people have access to accurate information,” says Yarosh of Binghamton.

Officials set up social media alerts using a system similar to Hootsuite that alerts administrators when people use certain keywords on social media. “We are often able to gauge how widespread the issue or rumor is based on the number of tags and messages we receive,” Yarosh says. “We then respond to clarify the issue or offer the latest developments.”

Having multiple offices involved in pushing alerts helped UNC Charlotte during a potential active shooter incident on April 30. Police dispatch pushed the first alert. Dispatch and the emergency management department, which can also send alerts, soon became so overwhelmed with other responsibilities that the duty of posting updates fell on the office of communications for business affairs.

“It was great to have that built-in redundancy to jump in and seamlessly continue to push alerts,” says Jackson, director of that office. “I think there may be some institutions that are afraid of social media for a crisis. But your audience is going to be using it regardless, so you need to be there. In the absence of information, people make up their own.”

More online: Mass notification system providers on social media practices, UBmag.me/massnotification
More content on campus safety and security: UBmag.me/security

Steven Blackburn is an associate editor at UB.
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In the face of persistent racial tensions and a greater awareness of gender inequities on campus—among other issues of social justice—a growing number of higher ed leaders are elevating the chief diversity officer (or CDO) to the president’s cabinet. The goal is for diversity to inform every decision made, related to everything from academics to facilities and procurement to athletics.

“Moving to the president’s cabinet gives voice and presence to the projects on which we work and concerns of people who don’t feel as though anyone is listening,” says Teresa A. Nance, the chief diversity officer at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. “We want to make sure we’re always asking ‘Whose concerns are not at the table?’ and ‘Who else do we need to be thinking about?’”

Raising the profile of the CDO reflects a willingness by campus leaders to expose and close long-standing equity gaps, adds Clyde Pickett, chief diversity officer for the Minnesota State system of colleges and universities. “Institutions not willing to call attention to equity are those that will be left behind as we compete more aggressively for students,” Pickett says.

Here’s how four diversity officers are leveraging their position to make issues of diversity, equity and inclusion priorities on campus.

Kathleen Wong-Lau, San Jose State University (Calif.): Providing ‘wise feedback’

At San Jose State, one of Chief Diversity Officer Kathleen Wong-Lau’s primary roles is serving as a professional consultant to her colleagues in infusing diversity and inclusion throughout campus operations.

The recruitment, retention, and promotion of underrepresented faculty, including women and educators of color, is another of Wong-Lau’s key areas of

INCLUSIVE IDEAS—Incoming first-year students discuss diversity during an orientation session in the student union at San Jose State University in California.
responsibility, particularly in the STEM disciplines.

Wong-Lau, who is a member of the university president’s cabinet, also works closely with the provost’s office and the university’s Center for Faculty Development to provide mandatory training to members of search committees. This should have a major impact, as San Jose State expects to hire a large number of new faculty in the coming years, Wong-Lau says.

“In the past diversity was a 20-minute add-on at the end of training,” Wong-Lau says. “Now the entire curriculum is based on bias reduction at every step.”

At the classroom level, Wong-Lau’s work has included instructing faculty in an inclusive teaching technique called “wise feedback” that’s meant to reduce the potential for interracial conflict.

For example, when a white faculty member assesses a paper written by a minority student, too much praise can seem patronizing to the student while harsh criticism can be construed as racist.

“None of this is happening at the conscious level, but the effect is there,” Wong-Lau says. “And the student’s academic identity is harmed because feedback is not considered valid.”

“Wise feedback” counsels the faculty member to use the student’s name, give blunt, direct feedback and then add an element of praise, such as “I know you’re capable of improving this essay.” This technique increases the chance the work will be resubmitted and that the student will get higher grades and even meet with faculty during office hours, Wong-Lau says.

Any time Wong-Lau works with faculty or administrators, she makes sure to include the research that validates initiatives like wise feedback.

“At universities, we’re not really good at using our research on ourselves,” Wong-Lau says.

When it comes to students, she provides leadership and other training to the members of campus success centers and other organizations that represent various cultures and ethnic groups.

“We provide them with opportunities to think about how they work across groups and ally with each other,” Wong-Lau says. “We give them leadership skills in how they can stand their ground in some situations and how they can collaborate in others.”

Tricia Brand, Portland Community College (Ore.): Stressing success with diversity

Despite community colleges being some of the most diverse institutions in the country, their leaders have seemingly been slower to elevate CDOs to the executive team.

At Portland Community College, however, Chief Diversity Officer Tricia Brand serves on the president’s cabinet, meeting quarterly with school executives to develop the institution’s equity plan. The goals include creating clearer academic pathways, increasing completion rates and facilitating more transfers to four-year colleges.

Such initiatives are critical because community colleges have often been the first choice for first-generation students, low-income students and students of color, Brand says.

“Before, we may have taken more of a right-to-fail approach with students. We said to them, ‘You have a right to be
here,’ but we’re not going to intervene too much,” she explains. “But because of a lack of access to four-year universities, we have a great responsibility to ensure that our institutions reflect and serve students who come to our colleges.”

One of Brand’s priorities is guiding campus leaders in reviewing data to spot and close equity gaps. This has led educators to, for example, help students who arrive on campus with little preparation to develop financial and academic plans.

Her work also touches facilities. Considering some students only have limited digital access off-campus, Brand has helped building planners ensure there is ample computer lab space and places to charge smartphones. She also has worked to provide classroom-adjacent areas where students can hang out, study or eat.

Key to any wide-ranging diversity plan is establishing benchmarks and measuring whether various departments are meeting goals such as diversifying the curriculum.

“We often get stuck in the aspirational piece,” she says. “We affirm the things we want to accomplish but we never require anyone to demonstrate that they’re moving toward meeting these goals.”

Katrina Wade-Golden,
University of Michigan:
Promoting diversity, department by department
Institutional-level chief diversity officers sometimes get support from others with similar titles across campus. At the University of Michigan, equity initiatives have been expanded across campus by academic diversity officers who have developed goals for each of the 50 schools, departments and divisions they represent.

Academic diversity officers work on behalf of three constituencies: students, staff and faculty, says Katrina Wade-Golden, the university’s deputy chief diversity officer, who supervises this team.

“These individuals serve as key change agents to point out the priority areas and ensure that traction is being made on strategic objectives,” she adds.

Academic diversity officers guide department heads on a range of strategies, including diversifying recruitment and retention, creating inclusive environments, and conducting climate surveys. With faculty, the officers provide professional development on inclusive teaching practices that engage students with diverse learning styles and identities.

And on the tech side of the spectrum, the officers make sure university websites and other digital assets are accessible to users with disabilities.

Recent university surveys have shown an increasing sense of belonging in departments where employees had reported some of the lowest rates of satisfaction, she says.

“A big positive is the pervasive nature of diversity, equity and inclusion in our environment,” Wade-Golden says. “The very fact that we can go to any corner of this university and say ‘diversity, equity and inclusion,’ and folks know what we’re talking about, that’s a key outcome.”

Tamra Minor, University at Albany,
State University of New York:
Looking beyond race and gender
Diversity offices often have a small staff, so their work is not always well publicized to campus communities. At the University at Albany, Chief Diversity Officer Tamra Minor recently developed a plan with the marketing and communications office to better promote her team’s achievements and services.

Minor is working to improve methods of assessing the university’s diversity initiatives so she can make the case for continued investment as well. For example, she has helped the university’s deans form campus climate committees and focus groups to measure progress in individual departments. Minor has also brought in professional facilitators to work with groups of faculty on diversifying coursework.

“There’s a lot of energy and interest behind this,” she says. “At the end of this year, when we pull together all of the goals of all the climate committees, we will end up with a rich campus plan.”

But establishing true diversity takes ongoing work. Minor’s office, for instance, continues to hold forums where members of the campus community can discuss times when they feel most and least included.

The work remains complex, because diversity covers more than just race and gender.

“For example, I’m not just a woman, I’m a black woman who was born and raised in a certain part of the country who does a certain type of work at a certain level within my organization,” she says. “And addressing all the different dimensions is only scratching the surface of why this work is so complex.”

Matt Zalaznick is senior writer of UB.
Flexible, simplified enterprise operations future-proof higher ed institutions

Unit4 solutions helping institutions innovate to meet changing expectations

Q&A with Austin Laird, Director of Product for Higher Education, and Elfie Smith, Strategic Business Architect, Unit4

Why do colleges and universities need to prepare for change in higher ed?

Austin Laird: Recent trends—for example, a drop in high school starters, shifting demands for career education, and growing acceptance of nondegree credentials—indicate that over the next three to five years, we’ll see potentially dramatic changes in the demographics of learners. Then there are statutory reporting requirements and data privacy considerations, as well as the need for more diverse program and course offerings. This all adds up to institutions needing to build an appetite for change and an ability to accommodate new models of delivering education.

Elfie Smith: This is not just a one-time shift in student expectations and requirements, whereby colleges and universities need to make one significant change. There will be many and ongoing changes we can’t yet predict. Some may be small and incremental, but they will add up to create a very different landscape that will require new ways of doing work to deliver an optimal student experience.

What institutional changes should higher ed leaders explore to successfully plan for future challenges and opportunities?

Austin Laird: Leaders need to be flexing and stretching their institutions, both technologically and culturally. They need to standardize business processes and adopt off-the-shelf software to run those processes, so there is more time and money for new initiatives. Using flexible and agile applications will also allow institutions to anticipate and meet future needs.

Elfie Smith: Developing a culture in which business processes can be readily adjusted will ensure that challenges can be addressed promptly and new opportunities can have beneficial outcomes. I have experienced the impact of broad organizational change-management business processes and adopt off-the-shelf software to run those processes, so there is more time and money for new initiatives. Using flexible and agile applications will also allow institutions to anticipate and meet future needs.

“Institutions need to create a People Experience in which administrative redundancy is eliminated and automation is leveraged so people have more time to evolve, innovate, and even reinvent what their institutions do and how they do it.”
training and support for employee development, and these actions went a long way toward enabling employees to not only cope with change, but also thrive given the opportunity to reenvision their work.

**How can institutions empower themselves to anticipate change and deliver experiences that meet the needs of the ever-evolving student?**

**Austin Laird:** Institutions need to create a People Experience in which administrative redundancy is eliminated and automation is leveraged so people have more time to evolve, innovate, and even reinvent what their institutions do and how they do it. Empowered by technology and modern enterprise systems, they can take time to consider how to support new business models, new learning models and new student markets.

**Elfie Smith:** Institutions can support their people by encouraging them to proactively identify new requirements and respond to them quickly. Employees who focus on meaningful, creative work will be more engaged and able to deliver exceptional services to students.

**What technology solutions can help institutions drive sustainability and growth to fully prepare for change and future opportunities?**

**Austin Laird:** Implementing technology solutions makes sense when doing so makes life easier and promotes an improved experience for students and other constituents. We have a planning and budgeting tool that embeds machine learning to find anomalies in budgeting from year to year—to catch problems that may have been missed or taken time to track down. Modern ERP and student systems are adopting these sorts of technologies, so as institutions move to modern applications, they will see the benefits. The nice thing about building modern solutions on modern platforms is that as technologies and requirements change, functionality can be brought incrementally into the application stack as it makes sense, instead of by the big-bang implementations we all dread.

**Elfie Smith:** Adaptable solutions that support automation achieve a dual benefit: They allow employees to focus on more complex student situations that require creativity, empathy and judgment, and they ensure that students only seek personal assistance for more complex challenges, rather than simple transactions that are handled by system-supported processes.

For more information, please visit [unit4.com/cp/ub](http://unit4.com/cp/ub)

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**The digital reality**

41% of students would have a better experience if they could interact more digitally with their institution

87% of students would be more satisfied if their university implemented a single digital system to manage all of their administration requirements

57% of higher-ed staff members in the financial, IT, HR and student services departments do not believe the current way their institution manages back-office functions is effective
Videoconferencing has been used by savvy college and university administrators, faculty and staff for upwards of two decades, with meetings and other administrative functions being the most obvious uses for the technology. In the learning environment, videoconferencing—also referred to as web conferencing—is still evolving.

The be-there-everywhere capability appeals to a variety of learners, so encouraging the use of videoconferencing in the classroom allows higher ed institutions to better serve nontraditional learners. “VC is now super simple to use. Quality has gone up and price has gone way down,” says Dov Friedman, founder of CirQlive, which helps colleges integrate learning management systems (LMS) with platforms such as ZOOM, Cisco Webex and GoToMeeting. Friedman is speaking at UB T ech® 2020 on how to use interactive video and web conferencing with the LMS.

Ahead are three best practices for getting the most out of videoconferencing technology to enhance active learning.

1. Use videoconferencing to strengthen connections

The capabilities of videoconferencing are opening as platform interfaces become more reliable. Learning can become an experience when professors invite experts to virtually attend a class. In addition, an expert conducting research in the field could bring students along on the journey.

“It allows us to pursue our research where it makes sense, bringing the latest advancements directly to the students as they happen,” says Claire Hamilton, associate provost and director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Massachusetts. She uses video conferencing in this way with support from colleagues Steve Pielock, assistant director of classroom technology services, and Dan Cannity, instructional designer and faculty support coordinator.

For higher ed institutions that maintain different campuses, videoconferencing provides new opportunities to connect. Pace University operates two campuses in Manhattan, and another two in Westchester County, N.Y. Learning communities taught by two faculty in two disciplines are conducted via the technology. “More innovative faculty have swapped campuses every other week,” says Beth Gordon, assistant vice president for academic and administrative services, information technology services at Pace. Faculty are also experimenting with chemistry labs in two locations, with the instructor at only one of them.

In addition, Pace students and faculty share whiteboards among their screens, so no one misses a detail.

Office hours, which are only as effective if they are attended, become virtually simple with videoconferencing. CirQlive has a module that schedules office hours and tutoring services that multiple people may attend together. Students can schedule a secure office hour with a unique URL and view available time slots. The instructor has the ability to have four-minute sessions with eight-minute breaks in between.

2. Encourage complete adoption of the technology

The complete adoption of videoconferencing across campus requires the right technology and the right attitudes. For students, communicating virtually is second-nature. But not all faculty are as excited to jump on-camera. Encouraging preparation plays a large role in a successful video presentation. “Faculty have to be more disciplined about talking clearly and keeping noise down,” says Paul Dampier, Pace’s CIO. He also recommends sending notes out beforehand so students may read them and be prepared for a discussion.

While videoconferencing via a desktop or laptop can seem simpler, clearer connections and range of motion are some of the perks of connecting through a smartphone.

Connectivity is top-of-mind for...
most on-campus IT departments, as Wi-Fi 6 becomes more common. But what about those students in areas without reliable internet access?

Western Governors University, a completely virtual school, offers students financial assistance to purchase the technology that will best support their online experience. Nearly three-quarters of WGU students are underserved in one or more of four categories: ethnic minority, rural residents, low income and first-generation college.

Back on Pace’s campus, an IT team helps support learning wherever it happens. That team includes 10 full-time employees, whose work is supplemented by about 30 student workers. Support generally occurs virtually, but team members are able to stop into classrooms as needed for hands-on assistance.

3. Consider encouraging a single platform across campus

A deluge of videoconferencing providers can make standardization complicated for campus IT teams. “By intentionally reviewing our designs, developing evolving standards, fostering strategic relationships with key vendors, and putting an emphasis on microservices to avoid a monolithic lift, we are able to achieve faster evolution, with less constraint from any one particular service,” says Pielock of UMass.

Overall, there has been a movement to mobile applications for videoconferencing. Zoom and BlueJeans are easily adaptable for classroom needs, says Friedman.

To make the user experience as easy as possible, WGU embeds videoconferencing tools into online learning materials for easy access. For the best possible learning atmosphere, users must be more aware of background noise. Experts say faculty should encourage students to use the chat feature available on most interfaces if they are hesitant to share questions or thoughts in a fully attended lecture.

The result of all such efforts? Videoconferencing is becoming a natural tool for everyone in enhancing learning.

Stefanie Botelho is UB’s newsletter editor.

WHERE THE STUDENTS ARE, AND WHERE THEY DON’T NEED TO BE— At Pace University, students can connect without being in the physical classroom, thanks to videoconferencing technology.

DON’T MISS UB TECH 2020, June 15-17 in Las Vegas, and its sessions on videoconferencing, including “Better Ways to Use Interactive Video and Web-Conferencing with Your LMS,” “Transporting Ideas, Not People, with Immersive Synchronous Lecture Halls,” and “Applying Classroom Design for Videoconferencing to Soft Client Rooms.”

ubtechconference.com

Major videoconferencing platform feature highlights

Zoom, zoom.us
• Session record, automatic transcription, closed captioning
• Integrates with Moodle, Canvas, Desire2Learn, Sakai and Blackboard learning management systems

Panopto, panopto.com
• Manage and search original and uploaded videos; private assignment folders for students
• Company partners with third-party captioning providers, including 3Play Media, cielo24, Rev.com, Verbit.ai and Automatic Sync Technologies

BlueJeans, Bluejeans.com
• Real-time metrics, screen sharing
• Works with Room Systems; allows for joining meetings from Cisco, Lifesize, Polycom and other H.323 and SIPbased room systems

Cisco Webex, webex.com/video-conferencing
• Host breakout sessions, testing and automatic grading
• No dial-in via WebEx app

Polycom, polycom.com
• Grant assistance for implementation, searchable database, instructional training and services

WHERE THE STUDENTS ARE, AND WHERE THEY DON’T NEED TO BE— At Pace University, students can connect without being in the physical classroom, thanks to videoconferencing technology.
Cloud-based app virtualization helps students ‘win’ at college and at life

Creighton University students using Nutanix’s Xi Frame to access courses from any device

As the computer client support specialist at Creighton University in Omaha, Robby Daniels has one overarching goal. “I want my students to win,” he says. “If I have winning students, everyone is happy.”

Quantifying that goal can be difficult, Daniels says, but student surveys, professor feedback and graduate opportunities all factor into the equation. And the common denominator in what’s become a successful calculation is Xi Frame.

Consistent access and experience for all
With Xi Frame, a Desktop as a Service (DaaS) solution, apps are installed on a cloud-based virtual machine that’s centrally controlled and managed by Creighton University’s IT department. When students log in, they can see an app’s user interface in a web browser that is accessible from any device—without having to install anything on a personal computer or tablet.

“Every student, whether they are an on-campus or distance learner, has the same platform, the same user experience, the same tool set—no matter what kind of hardware they’re using,” Daniels says. “Xi Frame supports Creighton University’s mission by increasing reach to students who can’t get to campus. And there’s less time spent by IT staff troubleshooting issues, because the platform is consistent and robust.”

Cost savings with easy administration
After Xi Frame was installed at the Creighton Heider College of Business in the fall of 2017, university leaders

“Every student ... has the same platform, the same user experience, the same tool set—no matter what kind of hardware they’re using.”
quickly realized the benefits of the cloud-based solution. Xi Frame was then implemented at two more of the University’s nine schools and colleges after traditional virtual desktop infrastructure proved too complex and expensive for the University’s needs. The expansion is expected to continue.

With Xi Frame, the IT department can easily administer app licenses to students who require them, often for just one semester. Staff can then remove those licenses and give them to other students who need them. In addition, the DaaS platform had led to cost savings at Creighton, a Jesuit Catholic university with about 9,000 students.

**Classroom space reclaimed**

“We are gaining classroom space by eliminating hardware, and that saves money because we’re not adding more buildings to accommodate rising enrollment,” Daniels says. “Information remains secure, and we can scale up or down as needed.”

Professors no longer spend time troubleshooting software issues in class, since Xi Frame provides a consistent platform that eliminates device compatibility issues. The nature of the solution, along with support from Xi Frame staff, helps Daniels meet his goal.

“Nutanix leaders believe that their customers need to win, and we are definitely winning with our genuine partnership,” Daniels says. “They are always there to help because they believe in students winning, too.”

For more information, please visit nutanix.com

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**Desktop as a Service brings simplicity, speed and flexibility to higher ed**

**Q&A with Carsten Puls, Senior Director, Xi Frame, Nutanix**

**What complications do higher ed institutions face in transforming their digital initiatives to improve learning in a BYOD environment?**

Students want to work from the device they’re most comfortable with or that is most accessible at a particular time or place. But having a policy to bring your own device presents many challenges, such as installing, supporting and managing apps on so many different laptops, tablets and smartphones. Some courses require apps that don’t run on all devices.

Licensing also becomes an issue. Every semester, a new class requires a set of apps, and at the end of the semester, app licenses need to be reprovisioned to start the cycle all over again for the next term.

**How can higher ed leaders centralize IT and apps through desktop virtualization to achieve this transformation?**

With Desktop as a Service (DaaS) and app virtualization, apps can be installed in a virtual machine that is hosted in the cloud or the university’s own data center. The app’s user interface is streamed into a browser that students can access on any device.

It’s very easy for IT staff to grant access to students who need the app and then remove access at the end of a course, because they haven’t actually installed anything on the student devices.

**How do institutions benefit from DaaS?**

The key benefits are simplicity, speed and flexibility. DaaS allows you to install something once and basically replicate it N number of times. That dramatically simplifies IT work because staff is only supporting one configuration.

Also, the DaaS provider handles all the overhead involved in managing the control plane, which connects users, creates and terminates virtual machines, and integrates with other systems. IT managers don’t have to install and build their own control plane, which is the traditional method when using virtual desktop infrastructure.

End users have the flexibility to use apps on any device, and they save time installing and configuring apps—or having to deal with IT staff installing and configuring apps on their personal devices.

**What makes Xi Frame different from other DaaS vendor products?**

Our services span multiple public clouds and private clouds or data centers—all with the same management interface. Xi Frame easily integrates with multiple identity management systems and cloud storage providers, making it easy to fit into existing environments. With a few clicks, you can be up and running within minutes, rather than months.

Our platform meets the most stringent security requirements demanded by enterprises, universities and government organizations. Xi Frame is bringing Windows apps into the web app world.
How mystery shopper and other initiatives can move admissions offices toward continuous improvements in customer service

It doesn’t take a magnifying glass to see how mediocre customer service in a college admissions office can sway a student’s college choice and have a colossal impact on the institution over time. Online inquiries that go unanswered or questions met with lukewarm or generic responses result in prospective students or family members looking elsewhere—and leave the institution with fewer contacts in the enrollment funnel.

“Quality of service helps differentiate us,” says Cate Clark, associate dean for graduate and adult undergraduate admissions at Regis University, a private institution based in Denver that competes with several area state schools. “In any service organization outside of education, it’s rare not to have a quality assurance plan,” she adds. Hiring “mystery shoppers” to report back on staff responsiveness helps her office meet its goals—which are especially important in today’s “Starbucks/Amazon culture,” she says.

Stellar service also helps in the college transition. Whether prospective students are first generation or part of a highly educated family, says Ashleigh Spatt of Eastern Michigan University, “there’s so much anxiety. They’re scared. They’re excited. There’s all this emotion. We need to be this stalwart beacon of strength.”

A late arrival for a campus visit or parking struggles “may seem like the end of the world to them,” but a quick, friendly text back from admissions will ease those worries, adds Spatt, associate director of admissions. “At the end of the day, yes, we do admissions recruiting. But it’s basically sales, and we need to be there to provide service.”

Admissions work tends to attract outgoing, welcoming people. “They’re generally cheerleader types,” says Kurt Eddins, co-owner and president of 360 Intel, a mystery shopping provider for higher ed and other industries. “But I have known several directors of admissions who did not blow me away with their personality. I was curious how they ended up where they did.”

No matter how great the team, areas to improve can always be found. From ensuring quick, quality replies at first contact to being that friendly guide throughout the whole application and enrollment process, admissions officers are upping their customer service game by uncovering weaknesses and then converting them into strengths.

Behind the scenes of a mystery shop
Regis has used mystery shopping since 2018 to keep tabs on service levels within graduate and adult undergraduate admis-
sions—areas that use a lot of paid media and paid searches to find potential students, says Clark. “With so much money being invested in marketing, it would behoove us to make sure we’re following up on inquiries.”

Shopping helps evaluate response timing and how well staff ask the right questions to ensure prospective students know their options, Clark says. “We really wanted our ‘speed to lead’ to be better.”

Her team of 26 counselors follows a six-step recruitment process, which could happen in one or more conversations. It involves building rapport to determine interests and goals, seeing if the person is a qualified candidate, presenting potential academic programs, explaining what the Regis community is like and the expectation for online students (the majority of adult learners), and going over financial aid options and finally the application process.

The department hired 360 Intel for 30 email and phone shops a month initially, and then reduced it to 12 shops per month. Clark says she liked the a la carte options, as opposed to a higher ed marketing service company that might offer similar services as part of a bundle only. (360 Intel completes about 5,000 shops a month across the country, with most costing about $50 each, says Eddins.)

Early on, the effort uncovered a technical glitch resulting in records of some submitted inquiry forms not getting through to counselors. “Had we not been shopping, we never would have known that,” says Clark.

In terms of service quality, she has found counselors generally appreciate the opportunity to improve. “We tried to make sure they understood that this is best for the student,” she says. Individual shop details are shared as they come in, and overall results—including excellent feedback such as a shopper saying they would now consider Regis themselves—get shared monthly with the whole team. Clark logs in to a portal for data visualizations and analysis.

One big team goal: more live transfers. “When a call comes in, it goes to an admissions assistant, who needs to find an available counselor,” Clark says. “More of our calls are going to voicemail than we’d like. That’s been eye-opening for us.”

Matthew D. Shank, president emeritus of Marymount University in Virginia, worked with the head of institutional research and planning to organize mystery shops in offices across campus. The effort, which lasted several years, provided “another way to grab feedback on how people are treated within the office. Combine that with survey data and it paints a good
Admissions office mystery shopping tips and tricks

Kurt Eddins, co-owner and president of 360 Intel, a mystery shopping provider for higher ed and other industries, offers this advice for implementing mystery shops to improve admissions customer service:

- **Decide if you’ll handle it internally or through a provider.** “There are a lot of do-it-yourselfers out there,” he says. But he makes the case for an outside partnership because of the more formal nature of the work. 360 Intel offers customers access to a sophisticated reporting dashboard.

- **Determine what exactly you want shopped.** Colleges can use mystery shopping for initial calls or emails or for campus visits. As Eddins points out, though, it’s much more challenging to hire campus visit shoppers. CSU Global used 360 Intel to check up on its third-party call center.

- **Understand in advance what a shop will entail.** Shop reports from 360 Intel are broken into sections, covering response time, response quality (customer service, salesmanship, etc.), and responses to deeper questions such as one about a particular academic program. “A lot of our clients will include certain curveballs to test their team on how they handle them,” Eddins says.

- **Be prepared for constructive criticism.** Reports prompted the Regis University team to build more career pathways knowledge, such as demand for jobs and salary outcomes, says Cate Clark, associate dean for graduate and adult undergraduate admissions. “We were failing in that area miserably.”

- **Use reports as teaching opportunities (and reasons to celebrate).** Admissions leaders will want to share immediately and see if trends and patterns emerge over time. Some have put together materials such as a “top 5 things we struggle with” memo. Other colleges have been able to share the good news that a shopper ended up enrolling. “It’s not something we are necessarily pitching,” says Eddins, “but that’s a great side benefit if it ends up happening.”

Melissa Ezarik is senior managing editor of UB.

More online: Former university president shares story of mystery shopping across campus, UBmag.me/shop
More content on enrollment: UBmag.me/enroll
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Look Closer: Is your ITSM platform draining your resources & budget?

TeamDynamix partnered with University Business to develop and deploy a survey of higher ed technology leadership in the UB audience in December 2019. Nearly 200 respondents participated, describing their budget allocations, staffing levels and the challenges of meeting technology expectations from students.

Increasing, decreasing or more of the same?
When asked if the IT budget at their institutions increased, decreased or remained the same over the past 24 months, the most respondents said that it had remained the same (46%), while 34% said it had increased and 20% said it had decreased.

Run-Grow-Transform
All respondents were asked what percentage of their technology budget is spent on “Run” (i.e., Operations/“Keeping the Lights On”), Growth (Enhancements or improvements) and Transformation (Non-incremental changes). On average, respondents said 67% of their budgets were spent on “Run” (maintenance and operations), while 21% was spent on Growth and just 12% on Transformation.

When asked how satisfied they were with the budget allocation they identified in the previous question, the majority said only “Somewhat satisfied” (64%), while another 29% said “Not satisfied at all” and just 7% said they were “Highly satisfied.”

“How growth and transformation in higher ed are both critical,” says Andrew Graf, Chief Product Strategist at TeamDynamix. “As new generations enter their college years, norms are challenged. It is smart to ask, is your tech strategy in line with the student of 2030? And how will you transform to be ready?”
Focus on the student experience

“Inertia can push us through time with blinders on,” Graf says. “It is so important that we look closer at what we are doing and that we challenge ourselves. We find that when IT leaders evaluate IT spend, that they are spending too much on operations and too little on the future. We have helped our customers improve maturity, which drives productivity gains, and as a result, resources can get reallocated to more strategic initiatives.”

Look Closer:

Do you have projects running off course because they are not being managed well?

Is your ITSM platform draining resources in hidden admin costs?

Can resource capacity planning help you better allocate time?

Are you causing your own IT issues due to poor change management?

IT systems and platforms need to support the emerging needs of higher education. TeamDynamix can help with your institution’s top initiatives with platforms that streamline student services, reduce IT service response times, and provide key insights and more control over projects and budgets, resource capacity planning and more.

To learn more, go to www.teamdynamix.com

*Data taken from the survey of UB subscribers, “Higher Ed Technology Leadership,” conducted in December 2019, with 184 respondents participating.
Voices in Tech | Brent Warner and Tim Van Norman

Stitching together communities among faculty

Campus leaders need to create a culture of communication to improve teaching and learning

How often are professors siloed when assigned classes and how does this affect student success and engagement?

**Warner:** I have had experience in other schools where professors don't feel like they have support from their department chairs or administrators, or don't have the opportunity to interact with their peers. So they get hired, they teach their class and then they leave campus, and nobody knows who they are. They are ghosts on campus. They haven't had the opportunity to participate in committees, faculty governance discussions or academic clubs. Or maybe they aren't even aware of those opportunities. In my department, we have cohort meetings with teachers and discuss what's working and ways to improve the curriculum. And with Tim's help, we have built systems in place to support communication and sharing.

What modern technologies can help increase faculty engagement?

**Warner:** Tim has been great with helping us build group Canvas modules for teachers to pull resources from. Meanwhile, I set up a Slack-type program we call River, where teachers come to discuss ideas, share resources and ask questions about pedagogy. It's important to have some sort of central resource that all educators can use. This act of sharing builds trust and faith in what you are doing as an educator in a non-judgmental environment. Teachers need to understand that they can share their work and shouldn't feel that their instructional methods are proprietary.

**VanNorman:** There are some tools that we don't make available to teachers. Part of what we do is find alternatives for expensive tools that the school doesn't have to buy. For example, providing solutions that teachers can use for free or at a reduced price.

How do you achieve administrator buy-in?

**VanNorman:** If I can get administrators to actually try a new technology that I'm interested in, a lot of the times they'll understand its importance. When I walk up to an administrator who was a teacher and say, “This is what I can do for a teacher,” it takes them no time at all to get it. Our audience needs to include administrators because, in the end, it's all about students learning. If students aren't learning, then we're in trouble.

How do you spread this culture of inclusiveness campuswide?

**VanNorman:** It's all about communication. I have the ability to hit our whole campus at one time by sending an email once every two weeks with tips and tricks. People tend to save these emails because they are used to getting marketing material five times a day. But they don't get that many from me unless we are working on a specific issue. It's an old marketing tactic. I also do presentations. In fact, between January 2 and 10, I did 10 different presentations here on campus. I do everything I can to get out there and be in front of people. This helps build a community among professors.

Steven Blackburn is a UB associate editor.
With all of the PD options out there, we want to make attending UB Tech® an easy decision for you. That’s why we’ve created an attendee guide right on our website. Plus, all of the latest program announcements and details are right there for you to explore.

What will you find online?

- Conference highlights and special events
- Details on sessions, tracks and the full agenda
- Top reasons you should come plus benefits of bringing your colleagues
- Featured speakers and their sessions
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7 REASONS TO BE AT UB TECH 2020

The countdown is on, and there’s much to look forward to at this year’s conference! GOOD NEWS for campus IT and other tech-oriented administrators planning to attend UB Tech® 2020: What happens in Vegas does not stay in Vegas. The tech trends, ideas, and insights heard and discovered will come home with attendees and their colleges and universities will be all the better for it. View the full agenda at ubtechconference.com and then join us Monday, June 15, through Wednesday, June 17, at the MGM Grand Las Vegas, a new venue for this year. Here are seven can’t-miss conference highlights to look forward to.

1. Women in Technology Summit. Now in its third year, this preconference event is a time for women (and men) to learn about unconscious gender bias in the higher ed workplace, get tips for moving up and mentoring others, and hear how women are reshaping campus IT. Amy Diehl, a gender bias expert as well as the associate vice president and chief information technology officer at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, will deliver the keynote address. Other speakers include Marilyn Delmont, chief information officer for the Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation, and Elizabeth Clark, deputy CIO of Harvard Business School. The event will also feature time for interactive networking with other attendees.

2. Conference keynotes on blockchain, student success and student engagement. The main event kickoff is Monday afternoon, when internationally known blockchain expert Primavera De Filippi from Harvard Law School’s Berkman-Klein Center for Internet & Society will speak on the promise of blockchain and its impact on higher education. Freeman Hrabowski, president of The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, will inspire attendees to renew their commitment to ensuring student success for all students during Tuesday’s keynote. And on Wednesday, Timothy VanNorman and Brent Warner of Irvine Valley College in California will explore student expecta-
tions for being engaged in their courses and how high-tech tools can be integrated into the classroom to meet those expectations.

3 Dozens of sessions on core UB Tech topics. AV integration, classroom IT, active classrooms and instructional technology. Program partners who are once again helping to bring the best speakers and content to UB Tech include CCUMC, the Consortium of College and University Media Centers; FLEXspace, the Flexible Learning Environments Exchange; and AETM, the Association for Audiovisual & Education Technology Management. These sessions will offer in-the-trenches ideas and solutions of interest to technology administrators at all levels.

4 The return of the popular esports track, new last year. This full track of sessions is provided by NAECAD, the National Association of Esports Coaches and Directors. Besides intro-level sessions for colleges just getting started with esports, the program will feature sessions on advanced topics aimed at institutions where esports is already in place. At the Esports Pavilion in the Expo Hall, attendees can network with their peers at other institutions as well as experts in the field.

5 An expanded technology leadership track. Created for and presented by campus CIOs and other top tech leaders, presentations in this track cover hot topics such as cybersecurity, enterprise IT, cloud computing and change management. These sessions, which will also explore the evolving role of the campus CIO, are ideal for administrators looking for big-picture perspective and advice.

6 The UB Tech Expo Hall. From the opening night reception to the closing networking reception and lunches and breaks in between, the expo floor promises to be buzzing with excitement. Product categories to explore include active classroom furniture, networks, cybersecurity, online learning platforms, displays and AV systems, student information and success solutions, document imaging and more. The Expo Hall is the place to be for attendees looking to get up-close and hands-on with the leading technology products and to have conversations with industry executives focused on higher education applications.

7 Three days of networking opportunities for individuals and teams. Many administrators attend UB Tech along with others from their campuses, so they can get the most out of the show and bond as a team. (Not to mention, one registration at full price qualifies all other team members for a half-off discount.) But both individuals and groups attending UB Tech have plenty of opportunities to network with other attendees and talk to speakers during refreshment breaks and in between sessions—ensuring they travel back home having met new friends from campuses across the country and beyond.

HOT TOPICS—Keynote speaker Primavera De Filippi (top left) will engage attendees as they envision the possibilities of blockchain for their campuses. From the keynote theater to the session rooms and the exhibit spaces, UB Tech offers many opportunities for discussing hot tech topics with new friends and old.

Photo Credit: lift16 by Ivo Naeflin, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/
Your Initiative. Our Execution.

Make your green initiatives on campus actually work.

Is your campus struggling to establish and maintain a sustainability program that actually works? Maybe you want to inspire students to produce less waste and recycle more consciously, but the efforts peter out after a few weeks.

Soon enough, you’re back to overflowing waste cans and unsightly dumpsters like the ones pictured right here.

Have you considered that the reason students don’t separate their waste streams is because you haven’t given them the proper space to do so? When bins overflow, waste streams mix together, and the motivation to participate declines. Students aren’t inspired to do the right thing when all they see is a hopeless mess.

Don’t let bins overflow.

When one bin is full, students will choose the next bin (regardless of whether it is the proper receptacle for their waste). When all bins are full, they will drop litter on the ground. This will defeat your initiative to create well separated waste streams. And it will detract from the beauty of your campus grounds. Don’t let that first bin overflow!

Think beyond the bin.

Don’t have the manpower to keep bins empty as often as required? Go underground! We offer a line of sleek waste receptacles that look like ordinary bins—but are attached to an underground container with a volume range of 4 to 9 cubic yards. The container sits inside a concrete sleeve to isolate it from groundwater. Waste is completely contained and won’t attract rats, birds, or bees. They’re even bear-proof.

These containers hold 46 times the volume of a typical trash bin. And they come equipped with software that enables you to track which ones are nearly full. So your trips to empty them can go from 46 down to one. Want to track trends? Software collects valuable data such as which bins and locations are frequented most or which students are participating.

Custom labeling and insertion panels allow you to collect any material stream you want (trash, recyclables, organics, textiles, etc.) Want to collect only containers? Provide clear messaging and an insertion hole just big enough for a bottle or can to discourage the discarding of items that don’t belong.

Your students deserve to live in a beautiful place, and your campus deserves to be that place. Never let another overflowing waste bin ruin your campus landscape. A clean, streamlined operation will keep students inspired to follow your sustainability initiatives for years to come.

Units now available for demo in Norwalk, CT.
To schedule your demo call us at 203 967 1100!
See more at vdrs.com/underground-storage
Hiding in plain sight: The future of higher ed recycling and trash disposal

Clean campuses attract more students—while saving money and the environment

Q&A with Matthew Turis, Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Van Dyk Recycling Solutions

Why is waste and recyclable production rising on college campuses?
As online shopping has proliferated over the past few years—in the recycling world, we call it the Amazon effect—we’re seeing a lot more cardboard on college campuses. Whether it’s product packaging or shipping boxes, the stream is definitely getting browner. In addition, the anonymity of large residential buildings such as dorms makes it easier for students to ignore recycling policies compared with homeowners, whose blue bins at the curb each week publicly demonstrate which households are recycling.

Why must higher ed institutions address these issues?
From an educational and environmental standpoint, it’s the right thing to do. But there’s also a financial component. A recent study said the value of recyclables has dropped 66% over the past year. Higher ed institutions with trash in recycling streams will lose money there, and they’ll spend more money to dispose of trash weighed down with materials that could have been removed through recycling. At the same time, as more schools value beautiful, clean campuses to attract students, they must ensure their recycling and trash are properly handled.

Where do current efforts on college campuses fall short?
Colleges and universities often lack manpower to efficiently empty recycling and trash containers, creating overflow that prompts people to leave trash on the ground or in a recycling bin where there’s more room. Large dumpsters are often located behind buildings, so students don’t notice how much waste they’re producing. And again, the anonymity of dorms works against proper recycling.

How does Van Dyk solve this problem more effectively than other sustainability or ‘green’ efforts?
Our underground waste containers are 4 to 9 cubic yards in volume, which dramatically increases storage at a given location. They have double drum doors that keep odors and germs inside, and vermin outside. Sensors track capacity so staff can arrange efficiently timed collections without constantly making the rounds.

Our containers are also aesthetically pleasing. A typical container looks the same as a regular garbage can. It sits on a 4-by-4-foot platform, but underneath is a vault that holds 46 times the waste of a typical storage bin. It is designed to prevent overflow, and there is an option to add chip card access to monitor usage. Staff can then pinpoint messaging.

For places that pride themselves on having a beautiful, clean campus, this is a much prettier solution than nasty, smelly dumpsters. Ultimately, it’s about increasing storage and making waste disposal more fun and novel.

For more information, please visit vdrs.com/underground-storage
Share this story online at UBmag.me/vdrs
Community engagement should be a focus for all colleges and universities, but especially those in urban environments. Marquette University has no physical boundaries with the city of Milwaukee. This gives students easy access to many of the city’s assets, including the lakefront. However, many students do not see a need to go to—and have negative perceptions of—the Near West Side.

That’s why the Center for Peace-making worked with students to launch CAMPus Impact alongside the Near West Side Partners Inc., a community and economic development organization. CAMPus stands for the seven Near West Side neighborhoods, which start with a C, A, M or P, and the entire Marquette community (“us”).

CAMPus Impact symbolizes the impact the Near West Side and Marquette can have on each other. Its main goals for students are to serve the community and to experience what Milwaukee has to offer—all while building relationships with those who live and work in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Fostering a cohesive community
CAMPus Impact won the 2019 International Town & Gown Association’s Intern Challenge due to hard work and community dedication. We recognize that Marquette students are community members of the Near West Side, making up about 10,000 of the 28,000 residents. We need to not only acknowledge this, but also make the most of our Marquette experience by supporting the already active community around us. Using SIGN as an acronym, here are ways to help students foster a cohesive university-city community.

• Simple: Community engagement needs to start somewhere, and it can start small and in a simple way. Any planned event does not and should not be exaggerated or daylong. It should be authentic and short. College students would prefer spending a few hours of their weekends building and fostering community. Students have short attention spans and may not sign up for activities they don’t think they will benefit from.

• Interesting: CAMPus Impact events are either experiential or service focused. No matter what we are planning, we make sure that there is some sort of interesting factor. We ask ourselves: “What is different about this event that will intrigue students?” and “How enjoyable will this event be?” When planning events, we need to keep in mind the students’ best interests and our partners’ assets to create something that will benefit everyone.

• Glad: Regardless of the activity that provides a space for students to make and build connections with residents and employees in the neighborhood, everyone should feel glad they participated. Yes, there will be times when we, as students, are outside in the cold picking up trash, but at the end of the day, we are grateful for the opportunity to go out into the community and meet the people who work and live there because I am sure that they are glad to see us, too.

• New: Lastly, we need to make sure students are participating in something new—something they have never done before and would not necessarily do on their own without having a place to sign up and explore with others. CAMPus Impact created the Fall Break Service Immersion Experience during which students go to the Near West Side to live and work with a variety of nonprofits over fall break. A student who attended said that it was “an amazing opportunity to strengthen and build new friendships with not only other students, but many members of the community and nonprofit organizations.” This is what should give us hope when planning and creating events for community engagement. This is a feeling that we want every student to have at least once during their college journey.

By Elizabeth Killian

Elizabeth Killian, president of CAMPus Impact, is a senior at Marquette University’s College of Education in Milwaukee and will graduate this May.
In today's workplace, unconscious bias and invisible barriers embedded in company culture constrain opportunities for women, and higher ed technology departments aren't immune. Women are underrepresented in CIO positions, hovering between 21% and 28% for the past decade, according to Educause's “The IT Workforce in Higher Education, 2019” study.

Defining gender-based barriers

While conducting research on workplace gender barriers, I interviewed two higher ed CIOs. One discussed how she was regularly excluded from both formal meetings and informal events. When invited to meetings, it was often an afterthought with her male boss saying, “Oh, we forgot about you.” She also mentioned that she doesn’t golf with her male co-workers, and those co-workers regularly discuss topics at work in which she has little interest, such as their cars.

This CIO described the loneliness of being excluded, noting that she doesn’t get the social interaction from her job that most men get. In addition, when she has talked with her boss about career goals, he has said, “Well, there’s nothing for you here.”

The other CIO described a different kind of barrier that women experience at her institution, which is related to not having their voices heard or supported. She said, “The women are consistently criticized for expressing any disagreement or dissent to what’s been decided or what’s been done, and it’s really at all levels, not just the senior level.”

In my subsequent research alongside Leanne Dzubinski at Biola University in California, we found that women leaders face at least 27 distinct gender-based barriers, such as exclusion, excessive scrutiny, unequal standards, lack of mentoring, male organizational cultures, workplace harassment and work-life conflict.

While some barriers, such as work-life conflict, may appear to be a personal issue, they are tied directly to work structures and norms that were created with men’s (but not necessarily women’s) lifestyles in mind. An example is an expectation for 24/7 availability. This can lead to pressure to accept inequities as justified and manage them. However, it’s not the women who need to change; what must change are organizational norms and assumptions that result in keeping women from advancing and making it difficult for those in leadership positions.

How can equity be attained?

Higher ed leaders must become educated on workplace gender bias and work to change inequitable practices. Here are three strategies for moving forward.

1. Consider culture changes. A culture in which everyone is expected to work long hours and be available extra hours may create work-life conflict that disproportionately affects female employees. Leaders should establish norms around working hours. Encourage everyone to not check email or work after hours except for emergencies. If there are projects or formal events that occur outside of normal workdays, require employees to take compensatory time off. This will allow women and men to have good work-life balance and set an equal playing field for women who may have caretaking responsibilities.

2. Ensure that women’s voices are heard and taken seriously. Communicate that workplace decisions are to take place only after consulting with all stakeholders. Train employees who lead meetings on effective facilitation methods to make sure all voices around the table are heard, considered and respected.

3. Help women advance. Talk with them about their aspirations, offer professional development, connect them with mentors, and sponsor them for visible stretch assignments and promotional opportunities.

Ignoring issues of gender bias means missing out on the full range of women’s input and perspectives. Equitable workplaces allow women to thrive and enhance an organization’s success.
Nazareth College’s Golisano Training Center (GTC) in Rochester, New York, wasn’t built to be your typical collegiate athletic facility. Perhaps it should become the norm.

The 108,000-square-foot GTC was designed for an NCAA athletic program (Nazareth currently competes in Division III) and as a venue for the Special Olympics. In addition to competition and practice facilities, the building also supports educational programs for Nazareth health and human services students in fields such as physical therapy, audiology and speech. Through the partnership, the college will provide free health screenings and wellness programs for Special Olympics New York athletes. The partnership will also offer Nazareth students the opportunity to develop a specialty in working with individuals with special needs.

Supporting all users
Many facilities have done a remarkable job adapting their environments to remove barriers for special needs users. The Nazareth team toured some to discover what works and what doesn’t. Whether you’re adapting an existing facility or you’re shaping a new building, here are three design and programming considerations:

1. Remember the caregivers. Every designer has a basic understanding of the amount of space a wheelchair requires because the Americans with Disabilities Act and subsequent building codes have mandated minimum clearances. However, what those minimums fail to account for—and even Universal Design principles sometimes miss—is the space required for a person or team of people who may be assisting one or more wheelchair users. For GTC, we incorporated such space as well as lifts into our restrooms, ample adult changing areas, and reconfigurable locker room benches.  

2. Take into account sensory processing and temperature control needs. Enter Syracuse University’s “The Loud House” in New York or Notre Dame Stadium in Indiana and you’ll find out that the sensory environment can be a factor in the performance of elite athletes. Distractions can play an even larger role for the special needs community.

Since GTC was designed to host a Special Olympics program that includes simultaneous events, it was important to consider opaque curtains, thoughtful audiovisual placement and control, and strategic use of color, which have been appreciated by all athletes. Temperature control was also considered since athletes with special needs may have sensory processing disorders and may be at increased risk of overheating.

A sensory recovery room was included as a respite from overstimulation. It also functions as a dark room for concussion protocols for all athletes.

3. Boost campus and community engagement with wellness programs. Nazareth leaders, and those at other higher ed institutions, understand the positive impact that athletic facilities, intramural athletics and wellness programs have on student recruitment and retention. For many campuses, that may have been reason enough to invest in a facility like GTC. However, Nazareth’s successful health and human services programs serve as a model for what can be achieved with a campus and community focus. Nazareth’s students work regularly with community patients to gain experiential learning, while the community gains resources. Special Olympians will be part of the Nazareth team of therapy, nursing, social work and athletic training students and faculty. And the GTC café and unified weight room will allow all groups to meet nutrition, fitness and wellness goals. Most critical to the success of the facility: Engaging all users at the outset. It is common sense, of course, but too often we program and design for typical users, and then look for barriers to correct afterward. Best practices for inclusivity will require more square footage in certain areas, so it is essential to work with the appropriate space requirements and get creative with your design and program to bring the building in on budget. Many design features for special needs users are advantageous to all users. The result is a unified win.
The Academic Esports Conference & Expo™ is the first professional development event to meld academics and the innovative world of esports. In this inaugural year, you’ll see the latest technology advances and gain top insights from the movers and shakers in higher education esports.

**OPENING KEYNOTE**
**THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF ESPORTS**

**DR. CONSTANCE STEINKUEHLER SQUIRE**  
Professor of Informatics, University of California, Irvine

Hear her thoughts on the vehicle that esports provides to enrich students in many aspects of their lives, with an emphasis on her extensive research into video games and learning.

**KEYNOTE**
**BREAKING DOWN SILOS: CONNECTING K-12 AND HIGHER ED**

**ADAM GARRY**  
Senior Director of Education Strategy, Dell Technologies

Adam will explore what must change to debunk perceived misconceptions of esports between K-12 and higher ed, and what each needs in terms of holistic student development to best prepare students for the future.

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There is no disputing that a college education has value. Those who earn a four-year college degree are half as likely to be unemployed and earn about $32,000 more per year than those who have only a high school diploma. However, as the cost of higher education has risen and student debt has exploded, America is amid a heated debate over how to reduce the financial burdens, and the type of college education that is worth the investment.

College rankings by earning power
While there are many different ways to evaluate the value of a college degree, a new report, “A First Try at ROI” by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, ranks 4,500 U.S. colleges and universities according to their return on investment, based on the graduates’ long-term earnings over a 40-year horizon.

What’s interesting about these findings is that many unexpected schools rank above historically recognized prestigious institutions. For instance, a number of schools of pharmacy, as well as marine and maritime academies, have a high ROI, along with several institutes of technology. The trait shared by 80% of the top 20 schools is the nature of the education they provide.

The takeaway from this report is that if students are seeking to earn a higher average income over the course of their careers, they could do well to explore either a specific discipline or a more technology-oriented education. As the president of Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey, I am extremely proud that we ranked 15th in the nation for ROI over that 40-year time span.

Earning power should be an important factor for students weighing their choice of school and career, if they are considering the cost of higher ed and the debt they may acquire to attend college. But it may not be the only factor for students and their families.

The new ‘well-rounded’ education
There are many students interested in pursuing careers in public service, the arts and education—work that is traditionally not as highly compensated. There are also millions of students whose interests and aptitudes align with a career in music, literature and political science.

How do we ensure that all students, regardless of their discipline, get a good return on their college investment?

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I would argue that the critical responsibility of any institute of higher learning, whether a specialized or liberal arts school, is to appreciate a new understanding of a well-rounded education. With an increasing demand for technology skills across all disciplines, it is necessary for colleges to equip students with the technical and problem-solving skills that are highly valued by employers and will become increasingly so over time.

A coursework tech infusion
That is why technology is infused into every course of study at Stevens, and all students, including those studying business, the arts and humanities, learn how to computer code. Few music majors across the country go on to become rock stars or land jobs with symphony orchestras, but having a degree in music and technology, which is offered at Stevens, can open many career opportunities in the music and entertainment industry.

The program allows students to explore their musical creativity while providing the technical and problem-solving skills that are highly valued by employers and will become increasingly so over time.

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