MINDING MENTAL HEALTH
How colleges and universities can provide support 16

The stranded credits problem
Launching a search-and-rescue effort for withheld transcripts 6

To stop pandemic parties...
... start asking students WHY 11

Bilingual boost
Connect with students and families in their native language 19

No-contact campus
Help students, staff and visitors avoid touching shared surfaces 24
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Recommended reading

With COVID disrupting nearly every aspect of student life, it’s no surprise that mental health issues are on the rise. So many simultaneous factors are contributing to anxiety, and colleges and universities are finding ways to provide more support to their student bodies. We explore how several institutions are prioritizing mental health and offer more resources to address the issue, on page 16.

As the pandemic impacts student retention and enrollment, especially among students of color, many colleges are making efforts to better serve Hispanic students for whom English is not their first language. These Spanish language and bilingual programs help connect with students and their families, in and outside the classroom, and are making a difference. See page 19.

Making a college campus safer is always a priority for administrators, and COVID has put those efforts into warp drive. We’ve assembled a host of solutions that colleges have put in place to reduce the need for one-on-one contact and having to touch shared surfaces. These solutions blend mobile technology, logistics, and AV and facilities tools that can reduce the likelihood of infection for everyone on campus. Check out our infographic on page 24.

—Eric Weiss, executive editor

Reasons to visit UniversityBusiness.com

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Still having fun
Beloit College boldly puts party protocols in hands of students
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Access accelerators
5 ways to improve free college promise programs
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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
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Contents
November/December 2020

FEATURES

16 Minding mental health
By Matt Zalaznick
How to provide more support during tumultuous times

19 Bilingual boost
By Matt Zalaznick
Connecting with students and families in their native languages, in and outside the classroom

24 No-contact campus
By Melissa Ezarik
Options for helping students, staff and visitors avoid touching shared surfaces

BEYOND THE NEWS

6 Supporting students with ‘stranded credits’

7 Higher ed M&A activity down 37% in 2020

8 Soft skills on the college application

COLUMNS

3 Leadership Insights
By Taylor Randall
Answering this pandemic demands flexibility

11 Professional Opinion
By Alan Kadish and Robert Amler
Responding to COVID parties

28 Professional Opinion
By Emily Barnes
‘Back to normal’ should not be the post-pandemic goal

40 Last Word
By Charles Knippen
5 ways to encourage virtual student interaction

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Stock photography from gettyimages.com unless otherwise noted.
LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Answering this pandemic demands flexibility, and higher ed must pivot—fast

*This article was adapted from the University of Utah’s *Executive Outlook*.*

**Dense institutional logistics threaten to hobble colleges’ and universities’ critical responses to the coronavirus pandemic.**

By Taylor Randall

We do lots of things well in academia. At our best, we’re deliberate and reflective, thorough and inclusive. But fast? As a sector, we’re not well known for being especially nimble. That’s becoming a greater liability during this historic pandemic, as conditions shift by the hour. Dense logistics baked into decision-making in higher ed—including prolonged stakeholder engagement and multilayered approvals—risk impeding our responses precisely when communities need our resources, expertise and aid the most. Colleges have an ethical obligation to shed slowdowns and put our know-how to practical, and public, use as soon as possible. Put simply: How society survives this crisis depends heavily on our ability to adapt quickly.

Outside the academic bubble

Here in Utah, this pivot has meant reaching outside the academic bubble to bring together philanthropic supporters, public leaders and business partners with faculty subject experts. These bonds have empowered the David Eccles School of Business to develop student programs and immediate public outreach that’s helping drive the statewide COVID response. The collective experience here may be helpful, if not instructive, as our peers and competitors across the country redouble their public service.

With foundation and private-sector backing, the school set about crafting a 14-installment webinar series that counseled hundreds of businesses and nonprofits statewide with practical and service-driven guidance. Speed was crucial, the first webinar coming fewer than three weeks after Utah schools closed March 15. The sessions brought precise guidance to help the business and nonprofit communities take specific steps to safeguard resilience and viability amid the unknown. How-to discussions that ranged from federal aid programs to reopening strategies, recouping losses and following health guidelines. The webinars have been viewed more than 18,000 times since their debut.

Over time, the effort has helped generate several COVID-related projects that continue to reinforce Utah’s public health and economic bounce-back—such as a mapping project to track the true spread of the coronavirus. The tracking effort fills a crucial role in the statewide virus response. Through a partnership with University of Utah Health, its initial goal was to test 10,000 Utahans at random across four counties. The data, which illustrate infection rates in various age groups and job categories, are proving instrumental to public-sector and business leaders.

At the same time, we’ve joined with the Utah business community in direct mutual support amid mutual need. Through our Hope Corps initiative, students who’ve lost job or internship opportunities can secure new work in the private and nonprofit sectors. The Hope Corps often covers their paychecks; other students become volunteers. Participating businesses and other organizations have brought in well-qualified workers in communications and marketing, database management and many other areas. We consider the approach like a Peace Corps for business.

In our own house, meanwhile, is a new summer admit program for aspiring master’s students who may be displaced by the economic upheaval. For particular programs, the offering provides savings up to $7,500 during these stressful times.

Fast action

None of this would have been possible without three core elements: collaboration and consultation with outside partners, quick thinking and an ability to swing into action. The school is structured to operate with some independence, so we could move rapidly without facing a deluge of high-level approvals from the central institution.

We also follow the fundamental standards of university—including its hiring practices, for instance—just with easier flexibility to adjust course.

Right now, we simply don’t have the time and luxury to overthink or weigh ourselves down in process. Lives and livelihoods are at stake. Let’s get out there.
New survey finds many institutions struggle with meeting the needs of vulnerable student populations

Kurzweil Education partnered with University Business (UB) to develop and deploy a survey of higher education leaders around the country, asking them about retention and student success, and how their institutions are meeting the needs of different student populations. It was deployed in October 2020 and nearly 300 higher education leaders participated, from a variety of sizes and types of institution and having more than 17 different job titles or departments.

Survey respondents were asked if student retention was a significant challenge for their institution overall. An overwhelming majority—some 92%—said this was a challenge. 42% described it as a “significant” challenge, while 49% said retention was “somewhat challenging. Only 8% said retention was not a challenge for their institution.

The next question presented respondents with a list of types of student populations and asked them to select which ones are most likely to drop out of school at their institutions. The top four answers were leaders by a significant margin: “Economically disadvantaged/low income students,” “First year/Freshman,” “Students with low high school/entry GPA” and “First generation in their family to attend college.”
As a follow up, respondents were then asked how confident they were that their institution would be able to reduce dropout rates and improve retention for the student population(s) they identified, in the next 3-5 years. The leading answer was “Somewhat confident” at 49%, followed by “Confident” at 31%. About even numbers fell on either end of the spectrum, with 9% saying “Not confident at all” and 10% saying they were “Extremely confident.”

Respondents were also asked if their institution was challenged by large numbers of incoming students who are academically unprepared for college. The vast majority of respondents overall (90%) said this was a challenge, with 53% saying it was “somewhat challenging” and 37% saying this was a “significant challenge” for their institution. Only 10% said academically unprepared students were not a challenge for them.

For any incoming students who are academically unprepared for college, how confident are you that your institution can provide them with the resources they need to succeed?

- **59%** Somewhat confident
- **22%** Very confident
- **17%** Low level of confidence
- **2%** Not confident at all

As a follow up, the next question asked how confident respondents were that their institution could provide academically unprepared students with the resources they need to succeed. While 22% selected “Very confident,” a significant majority (59%) said they were only “Somewhat confident” and another 17% said they had a “Low level of confidence.”

Similarly, respondents were asked how confident they were that their institution could provide English Language Learner (ELL) students or students with learning disabilities or reading difficulties with the resources they need to succeed. Just 18% said they were “Very confident,” while 51% said they were only “Somewhat confident,” some 26% said they had a “Low level of confidence” and 4% said they were “Not confident at all.”

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Supporting students with ‘stranded credits’

How big the problem is and what colleges and universities can do to help

Colleges and universities that serve higher populations of Pell grant recipients are more likely to withhold a transcript from a student over outstanding balances. Among those that withhold transcripts, 64% will do so for a balance of less than $25. In addition, two-thirds of institutions do not have debt forgiveness practices, and three-quarters do not have any debt elimination initiatives.

That’s all according to a new report from AACRAO, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, “2020 Stranded Credits Report: Another Perspective on the Lost Credits Story” (UBmag.me/aacraoreport).

While the report notes that little data is available to know just how much of an impact stranded credits have overall, a new analysis from Ithaka S+R, the research and strategic guidance arm of the nonprofit ITHAKA, reveals that roughly 6.6 million students and former students may have stranded credits from courses they completed.

That research (UBmag.me/ithaka) also estimates colleges and universities are owed as much as $15 billion in unpaid balances. In addition, adult learners, lower-income students and racial and ethnic minority students were found to be most likely to have stranded credits.

The analysis is the first systematic investigation of the scope and impact of stranded credits.

While transcript holds are viewed by many higher ed leaders as the most effective way to collect on outstanding balances, “the practice creates an obstacle and a paradox for students who need the transcript to continue their education or obtain a job that will help them pay off that and other educational debt,” the Ithaka report notes. And with COVID-related financial strain on colleges, it’s possible colleges are now being less lenient in removing holds for students who ask about their options.

Search and rescue efforts

Few formal programs are designed to help students access these credits, the Ithaka researchers note.

A couple of states outlaw transcript withholding in all or in certain circumstances, and similar legislation has been proposed in a few additional states. Some individual higher ed institutions have developed debt forgiveness programs to encourage a return to college for completion of a degree, and the report highlights nine such efforts. Others have emergency microgrant programs for current students with good academic standing and relatively small unpaid balances.

The next step for the research team involves developing additional solutions, and the team anticipates releasing a new report that details each proposed solution by early 2021.

The AACRAO study recommends developing debt elimination and forgiveness programs, as well as the following ideas for institutions:

- Instead of withholding transcripts for outstanding balances of less than $25, establish an internal fund to eliminate these small debts.
- Widely distribute all written policies about when an official transcript will not be released.
- Ensure students know how these circumstances can be avoided.
- Provide a formal avenue for appeal.
- Provide students with a single unofficial transcript.
- Release official transcripts to a prospective or current employer if necessary.
- Notify students of your policy and practice early and often, particularly if a student has a transcript hold.

—Matt Zalaznick and Melissa Ezarik

UniversityBusiness.com
LEADERSHIP

Higher ed M&A activity down 37% in 2020

Trade schools and institutions with nursing and computer science programs were attractive to investors this year, although COVID and the presidential election slowed overall merger and acquisition activity in higher ed, new research shows.

M&A activity declined in 2020 by 37% through September, with the 27 transactions made by that point in 2020 driven by schools seeking “defensive synergies to stabilize finances amid COVID-19 impacts,” according to Capstone Headwarters’ “Post-Secondary Education October Update.” Over the same period in 2019, 43 transactions were announced or closed. Institutions likely waited in this election year to see how a potential administration change could impact funding and the regulatory environment.

Higher ed could see near-term growth, however, as enrollment tends to climb when unemployment is high, the report said. Nursing appears to be one of the prime areas of potential growth. Approximately 500,000 registered nurses are expected to retire within the next two years, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that 1.1 million new nurses are needed to meet demand. Another 117,700 new nurse practitioner positions, which require a master’s degree, will be created by 2029, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Two-thirds of nursing schools reported reaching enrollment capacity, resulting in more than 80,000 qualified applicants to associate and graduate nursing programs being rejected last year, the report said.

Notable 2020 nursing education acquisitions included Adtalem acquiring Walden University in September for $1.48 billion and Vistria Group acquiring Unitek Learning in March for an undisclosed amount. Vistria also acquired Brookline College, which offers nursing and other programs through online and on four campuses across Arizona and New Mexico.

Computer science will be another area of high growth as the pandemic has forced rapid technology adoption in all industries. U.S. IT and computer jobs, 76% of which require some level of postsecondary degree, will grow by 11% (530,000 new positions) by 2029. Cybersecurity jobs, with a median salary of more than $99,000, should see the steepest increase, at 31%. Many schools have launched new IT programs. The report includes a chart noting the date of select transactions, the target, the acquirer, the location and the buyer company type.

5 to-do’s for tracking student records in a merger or closure

“Merger” and “shutdown” are two words no college administrator wants to add to their operational vocabulary. But one or the other may be a matter of survival for many institutions in the COVID era. Securing student records from the institution that is closing is important. Best practices for this process are detailed in a new report from AACRAO, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (UBmag.me/records).

Here’s a partial list of action items for closing institutions:

1. Notify current and former students of the deadline for requests to change records.
2. Determine a date for the transfer of records. After that, all records requests should be directed to the receiving institution.
3. Create an inventory of all student files, listing record types, file formats and the years/population of students for each format.
4. Provide records from the closing institution to the receiving institution or entity electronically or in the original file format.
5. Consider removing all holds that would prevent a student from receiving a diploma or transcript if the financial obligation will not follow the students’ records to the receiving institution.
Beyond the News

ADMISSIONS

Soft skills on the college application

While most educators agree soft skills are crucial for higher ed and workforce success, the so-called “5 C’s” may be getting short shrift in the college admissions process, according to a new analysis. Nearly all admissions decision-makers and college placement counselors, plus 88% of high school students, agree that demonstrating creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creative problem-solving should be an important part of applying to college, according to an Adobe for Education study. Here are two areas where higher ed admissions leaders can make adjustments to give soft skills their proper prominence in the college- and career-planning pipeline.

—Matt Zalaznick

Demonstrating soft skills on college applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>High school students who wish applications provided more ways to showcase their personalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>Students who don’t know how to showcase creativity in their applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Admissions decision-makers who say students demonstrate creativity “very well” on applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>Students who are learning creativity tools (such as photo, video and design apps) in their classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Students who worry their applications will not stand out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Students who admit they don’t know how to stand out or reflect who they are within their application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluating soft skills on college applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>Admissions decision-makers who want to evaluate students beyond test scores, GPAs and other “hard skills”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Admissions professionals who believe colleges need to take a more holistic approach to evaluating students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Admissions professionals who say portfolios and personal websites can showcase skills like creativity and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Students who are currently building an online portfolio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29 hours
Average time students spent preparing their college applications

11 minutes
Average time college admissions officers spend reviewing each application

83%
Admissions officers who review more than 400 applications each cycle

Source: Adobe for Education study of 1,000 students, 250 college admissions decision-makers and 250 high school placement counselors, DAmag.me/adobestudy
Underserved students, schools and communities in northern New Jersey soon will be getting expert advice on COVID-19, courtesy of a new initiative at the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine at Seton Hall University.

As part of their Human Dimension Course, medical students are taking part in the philanthropic and educational effort “COVID SOS (Support our Schools),” which will allow them to help deliver critical resources to K-12 schools while gaining powerful hands-on learning experiences. Support Our Schools is part of “Reopening America: Hackensack Meridian Health’s Assist Program,” which began in June and will now be a bridge to help schools open safely. Students will be tasked with developing materials and guidance and helping schools forge safe reopening strategies.

“Even during a pandemic, learning must go on,” said Bonita Stanton, founding dean of Hackensack Meridian, in an announcement. By helping school districts get their classes up and running, our medical students are also learning valuable lessons themselves.

How the program works
Over three years, the Human Dimension program trains future doctors on “social determinants of health,” such as housing and food access. Student teams are matched with underprivileged families within various communities, and the bonds formed help ensure better outcomes for all. Nearly 150 families have taken part throughout the state.

The current effort is fostering safe environments for schools and students during the pandemic through a hotline, weekly newsletter, site visits, and policy reviews and endorsement.

Each school gets a task force of eight medical students who have oversight from a faculty physician from Support Our Schools. Those students are trained in the latest in COVID-19 research and developments. The task force then talks with school leaders each month.

Districts have access to the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine Faculty COVID Advisory Board, which is hosting weekly Q&A sessions and offering scientific updates. Students, parents and school district leaders are getting some of the best guidance they can get, especially in areas where there has been very little help before.

The medical school—part of a network of 17 hospitals and 500 patient care locations—won the NOVA Award from the American Hospital Association this past summer for Human Dimension (UBmag.me/meridian). —Chris Burt

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Community Outreach

Medical students deliver ‘COVID SOS’ to local schools

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Beyond the News

STUDENT SUCCESS

Transfer data dispels two pandemic impact assumptions

The number of students transferring from two-year colleges to four-year institutions increased by 2.6% during the fall, but overall transfer enrollment dropped 4.7%, according to the “COVID-19 Transfer, Mobility, and Progress Report” from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (UBmag.me/covidtransfer).

The findings dispelled two prognostications that had been floated when the COVID-19 pandemic struck—that there would be students en masse transferring out of four-year institutions and going back to two-year colleges and that there would be considerable movement within community colleges or even within four-year institutions. Neither has occurred.

However, the declining numbers in all other areas of transfers along with middling enrollment figures previously released by the Clearinghouse show there is considerable work left to do in higher education, most notably for community colleges.

“Despite fears that many would be forced to transfer to lower-cost or closer-to-home options, student mobility overall appears constrained,” said Doug Shapiro, executive director of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, in an announcement. “The pandemic seems to be affecting students mainly by keeping them out of college, not by driving them to change colleges.”

Even though enrollment numbers have missed the mark, the 2.6% increase in upward transfers was a small victory for four-year institutions and students who are making the move.

“This is essentially a great year to be looking to transfer from a community college to a four-year institution,” Shapiro said. “But so far, the results appear to be mixed in terms of whether or not that is actually increasing the equity and diversity of access along this pathway.”

Though upward transfers increased for Asian-American, Latinx and White students, Black student transfers declined slightly at 0.3%. “That says that Black students are falling further behind their peers in terms of this particular transfer pathway to the bachelor’s degree,” Shapiro said.

Lateral college-to-college transfers declined by 8.3% year over year. “Summer swirlers”—those students who were at a four-year institution, transferred to community college over the summer and then transferred back to the four-year school—dropped by 10.8%. Reverse transfers saw the steepest decline at 18.4%.

“We were among those who expected to see an increase in that behavior,” Shapiro said. “I don’t really have a good explanation for why.” He offered two possible reasons: “the overall challenges that community colleges appear to have had in transitioning their courses to online” something that for-profit institutions have excelled at, as well as doing “a better job of capitalizing on the pandemic to increase their enrollments.”

—Chris Burt

Building a fairer college transfer system

A group of high-profile organizations is pushing for reforms they say would make the transfer system more equitable at public colleges and universities. Members of The Scaling Partners Network, created by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, say changes are urgently needed as the COVID economic crisis could create a historically large wave of transfer students.

The network is calling upon legislators to, among other actions, incentivize institutions to develop, scale and sustain programs that promote collaboration between institutions.

Recommended actions for higher ed leaders include:

1) Disaggregating, analyzing, and regularly distributing data from sending and receiving institutions to community colleges to better understand current student outcomes
2) Developing tuition price guarantees and scholarships for transfer students similar to assistance awarded to an institution’s first-year students
3) Creating clear pathways with robust dual-admissions agreements that map student pathways
4) Building a sense of belonging for transfer students
5) Guaranteeing applicability of credits upon transfer —Matt Zalaznick
PROFESSIONAL OPINION

To stop college students from attending COVID parties, start asking why

Here’s what American colleges are getting wrong in their attempts to stop the spread of COVID on campus.

By Alan Kadish and Robert Amler

Statistics will not impel them to change behavior. We need to make it personal.

Attending large social gatherings without a mask has been called the new “public smoking.” Despite definitive research that proves the dangers of second-hand smoke, it took decades to convince smokers to refrain from smoking in public. Ultimately, public smoking was largely eradicated across the U.S., when the public health community looked to understand why people were so resistant and created programs with those specific attitudes in mind. Now it’s time for higher ed leaders to adopt a strategy aimed at understanding why college students are resistant to social distancing, in order to modify behaviors.

Taking risks to socialize

America’s college-aged students continue to socialize in large groups, even as large swaths of the U.S. population are (finally) serious about social distancing and mask-wearing. The overwhelming response of college leadership has been to create the strictest of policies and dole out harsh punishments. Yet flouting the threat of suspensions and expulsions, disregarding wide-reaching educational campaigns and remaining undeterred in the face of rising numbers of COVID-19 related deaths, students still doggedly resist attempts to alter their behavior to stop the spread.

This August, when we learned that a group of our incoming students ignored the college’s rules, our leaders decided to require the rule-breaking students to meet with a physician to go over campus policies and health risks associated with ignoring the rules. In consultation with mental health professionals, the students had personal interviews with physicians and a psychiatrist to get to the root of why they were willing to jeopardize their own health, the health of others and potentially their future careers.

An overwhelming theme emerged: students wanted to feel socially connected as they began college. They worried that missing this opportunity could impact their ability to form friendships, create a professional network and perhaps even hinder their future careers.

Steven Pirutinsky, a professor at Touro College Graduate School of Social Work, says social interaction is a critical developmental task for college-age young adults. Social stimulation is a key part of that stage and an activity they don’t want to miss. Additionally, in the early 20s the brain has not fully developed the capacity to monitor and control behavior.

When students are deciding whether to attend a party, they calculate risk—and, generally determine they are unlikely to develop a serious case of COVID. Decisions are based on perceived personal risk, not public implications. Reckless behavior in young adults reflects a mismatch between the type of problem we are facing and the type of thinking they do.

Lessons learned: Creating community to stop the spread

Now we realize that creating real, meaningful opportunities to socialize and connect, rather than strict punishments, is the key to stop the spread on campus. Our public health approaches should take this perspective into account.

College leaders must try to develop virtual alternatives that would satisfy the need for socialization while minimizing risk. To alleviate student worries about their future careers, schools can provide mentorships where the mentor and mentee schedule regular Zoom meetings. Counselors should be available by Zoom as a safe space to address student concerns. For clubs and other extracurricular activities, there are many software solutions to hold virtual meet-and-greets, trivia nights, virtual fitness classes, movie nights, game nights, book clubs or religious services to offer a few ideas.

With a little creativity, institutions can cultivate a sense of belonging and connection among students and faculty.

Ultimately, as some degree of “sanction” was appropriate, our students were asked to perform community service in a COVID-safe manner, which delivered a lesson and had the added benefit of making them feel socially connected.

When talking about safety and risks, our messages should not simply rely on the medical model (“as your doctor I’m telling you what to do/not do”). Large numbers and statistics will not impel them to change behavior. Instead, we need to make it personal. Find anecdotes of young people, or loved ones, who have gotten severely sick. To deliver the most persuasive argument, make the messages emotional, immediate and personal to compel students to make the necessary changes to keep us all safe and healthy.

Alan Kadish, MD, is president of the Touro College & University System and New York Medical College, a member of Touro. Robert Amler, MD, is dean of the School of Health Sciences and Practice at NYMC.
How innovative institutions are thriving through digital transformation and consolidation

Southern University and A&M College System, Roosevelt University make strategic decisions to become more student-centered

Amidst an increasingly challenging higher education landscape, some leading institutions are finding ways not only to survive, but thrive, through strategic innovation and digital transformation. By using technology to improve efficiency, while streamlining processes and consolidating operations, innovative colleges and universities are creating new ways of doing business that reduce costs, while better serving the needs of students.

SU System transforms digital and business processes

With five campuses across Louisiana, the Southern University and A&M College System (SU System) is a historically Black public university system founded in 1880, serving over 8,000 students. Driven by a state legislative mandate to find ways to improve efficiency and centralize back office operations to reduce costs, while recognizing the need to transform the student experience, the SU System launched a strategic initiative, “BannerSUnited,” in 2018.

One of the main goals of the initiative was to consolidate the multiple Banner ERP systems being used across campuses into a single shared application. The new consolidated platform would benefit the entire university system by establishing common business processes and creating significant cost savings. But just as importantly, the consolidation would improve the student experience, by creating a common course catalog, and simplifying the admissions and registration processes.

“The consolidation of the legacy Banner systems is a significant step toward realization of a long-term benefit for the SU System,” says Dr. Ray Belton, President-Chancellor. “The new Banner platform will facilitate operational efficiencies across campuses and create opportunities for greater economies of scale due to cost savings. Students will enjoy consistent academic experiences regardless of location.”

The BannerSUnited project was a complex undertaking, as the SU System was changing both operations and supporting technologies simultaneously. After a careful evaluation, the SU System selected Strata Information Group (SIG) as their implementation partner to assist with creating new shared business processes and policies, and to provide functional and technical implementation support.

After 18 months, the new consolidated Banner system went live in December 2019. Students in the SU System are now able to move seamlessly between all campuses, and the System has realized significant time and cost savings. In addition, the SU System now has access to improved analytics which help to identify students in need of support, aiding in student success and retention efforts.

“Today’s students require their institutions to operate differently than in the past,” says Emily Rudin, General Manager of Client Services at SIG. “Centralizing back office services and the ERP created savings for the SU System, and they transferred those savings to improving their student-centric services. The SU System is ahead of the game now, and well positioned for the future.”
Roosevelt University acquired Robert Morris University

Roosevelt University is a private institution founded in 1945, with three campuses in and around Chicago and serving 5,000 students. In the spring of 2020, Roosevelt acquired neighboring institution, Robert Morris University, to become a single entity. Each university offered different types of programs and served different students, but both institutions faced enrollment pressures and saw an opportunity to better serve students while ensuring business sustainability. Roosevelt would continue to provide graduate studies and liberal arts degrees, while Robert Morris brought career and two-year programs to the newly consolidated institution.

The leadership of both schools had an ambitious goal of combining all business operations, technologies and data in less than four months, when the average time for similar projects is typically 12-16 months. To attain this objective, the leadership of Roosevelt and Robert Morris selected Strata Information Group (SIG) as their implementation partner.

The combined leadership team from Roosevelt, Robert Morris and SIG quickly developed new business processes, created a new Banner ERP environment and assessed technology and data structures to support consolidation. Implementation included data conversion into the new Banner ERP system, as well as testing, training, troubleshooting and supporting all systems, prior to, during and after the go-live date.

The timeline was achieved, and full consolidation of the two institutions was completed in just four months, and within budget.

“Roosevelt’s acquisition of Robert Morris made perfect sense, because they serve different student populations,” says Rudin. “If institutions are going to survive in today’s environment, they must start looking at themselves as businesses, that are in the business of educating students. To do that, they need to look at the market, and see opportunities to add programs they’re not currently providing. Successful mergers and acquisitions like this are an illustration of that strategy.”

Since 1987, Strata Information Group (SIG) has helped hundreds of colleges and universities realize the full potential of their technology to improve services for students, faculty, and staff. SIG specializes in project-based IT consulting, staff augmentation, managed services, business process, technical support, and technology procurement services.

To learn more, visit www.sigcorp.com
Share this story online at UBmag.me/sig
New survey finds asynchronous video becoming more important

This survey of higher education leaders was developed in partnership between University Business (UB) and TechSmith and explored the use of asynchronous video in coursework—defined as instructional video that has been recorded by faculty—at colleges and universities before and during COVID-19. The survey was deployed to the UB audience in late September 2020, and 233 higher education leaders participated.

Use of asynchronous video, previously and during COVID-19

Respondents were asked how their institution utilized asynchronous video in online coursework prior to COVID-19. The leading answer was “My institution provided a centralized, standard video platform for faculty and staff,” selected by 38% of respondents. Another 30% said “My institution recommended a few options for video platforms, and faculty and staff could use what they want,” while 21% selected “Faculty and staff used video platforms of their choosing, my institution did not provide a centralized, standard platform.”

Respondents were then asked how their institution uses asynchronous video today, in remote learning environments during COVID-19. The numbers of respondents saying their institution provided a centralized, standard video platform increased to 50%, while those with institutions recommending a few options for video platforms increased to 37%.

At the same time, the number of respondents whose institutions allow faculty and staff to use a platform of their choosing decreased to 11%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did your institution use instructional video prior to COVID-19?</th>
<th>How does your institution use instructional video today, during COVID-19?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided one centralized video platform</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided options for video platforms</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and staff chose their own video platforms</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My institution didn’t use instructional video</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, respondents were asked to rate how important asynchronous video was to online learning at their institution, on a scale of 1-5 stars, with 5 being “Very important.” The overall average was 4.3, with 48% of respondents rating it a 5.
**Faculty use of video**

When asked to identify the biggest challenges their faculty face when it comes to using asynchronous video for teaching, by far, the most common answers were "Lack of time to create videos" selected by 55%, and "Lack of training on how to best use video to improve teaching," selected by 54%.

![Challenges of Faculty](image)

**What are the biggest challenges your faculty face when it comes to using asynchronous video for teaching?**

- **54%** Lack of training on how to use the video platform
- **55%** Lack of time to create videos
- **39%** Fear of making bad videos
- **36%** Concerns about meeting accessibility requirements

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their faculty who are currently creating asynchronous video for teaching. The most respondents (38%) said it was “26%-50%” of their faculty, while another 23% said it was "10%-25%" of their faculty.

Similarly, the next question presented the same percentage ranges and asked respondents what they would consider to be a **successful level of adoption** of an asynchronous video platform by their faculty. The ranges were much higher, with some 44% saying “51%-75%” and 23% saying “More than 75%.”

![Adoption Levels](image)

**About what percentage of faculty at your institution are creating asynchronous video for teaching, and what would you consider a successful level of adoption?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current level</th>
<th>Ideal level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%-25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%-50%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51%-75%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 75%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To address this gap between current use and the ideal levels of adoption, respondents were then asked what would **improve** asynchronous video adoption and use by faculty at their institution. The top answers were "More one-on-one training" (48%), "A platform that makes it easier to create video" (44%), “More live training opportunities” (40%), and "A platform that makes it easier to share video" (34%).

Some 40% of respondents said that their institution would be implementing an asynchronous video solution or platform in the next year.

"The survey results are clear: more colleges and universities recognize the importance of asynchronous video for teaching and learning and that trend is only going to continue as institutions strive to ensure academic continuity and improve the quality of online courses," says Shane Lovellette, Education Strategy Lead from TechSmith. “At the same time, many faculty members say they need more time and training, and a platform that makes it easier to create and share videos. We can help.”

TechSmith provides Knowmia, the leading platform that enables educators to easily create, edit and share asynchronous instructional video, make their content accessible and engaging, and build connected, active online learning communities.

TechSmith also offers dedicated customer success managers who work directly with customers to provide webinars, customized trainings, integration expertise, and on-demand resources including video tutorials, guides, best practices and advice to help faculty get the most out of instructional video.

To learn more, go to [TechSmith.com/education](http://TechSmith.com/education)
How colleges and universities can provide more support during tumultuous times

S
ocial isolation, health and financial fears, political upheaval and natural disasters are fueling the rising anxiety among college students, whether they’re on campus or online this fall.

Campus life during COVID also requires students to have “courageous conversations” about personal safety and behavior, says Asia Wong, director of student health services and the University Counseling Center at Loyola University New Orleans. “You used to fight with your roommate about doing the dishes, and now you’re having conversations about what party you went to last night or who you brought home.”

Administrators can support these discussions by giving students a safe space to report unsafe situations—such as a party they may have attended—without fear of reprisal or feeling like they are snitching on friends.

At Loyola, students have also participated in socially distanced bingo games and other events while the university’s student organization fair was held online with chatrooms for individual clubs.

“Campuses need to create opportunities for in-person engagement that feel safe,” Wong says. “For me, the two words around student engagement that are
different than in the past are ‘safe and intimate.’”

Along with creating a supportive campus culture, there are several other steps campus leaders can take to care for mental health of students, whether they are on campus or online.

Managing online learning challenges
Depression and anxiety are rising more sharply among low-income students, students of color, women, students in the LGBTQ+ community and students who are caregivers.

Mental health problems were also more prevalent among students who struggled with the shift to online and distance learning, according to a mental health survey of 45,000 students conducted between May and July 2020 at nine public research universities.

More than half of students who said they adapted “not well at all” to distance learning also reported experiencing anxiety or depression, according to researchers at UC Berkeley’s Center for Studies in Higher Education.

The authors of the report recommended the following strategies for treating student anxiety and depression:

1. Allocate more resources, reduce barriers and increase communications.
College and university leaders should expect an increased need for mental health treatment during the fall 2020 semester, regardless of whether students are on campus or online.

Administrators should work to increase staff to offer more mental health appointments throughout the day as students have reported they did not have time to access treatment.

Administrators can also publicize mental health resources extensively, and encourage faculty and staff to share the information on a variety of platforms.

2. Expand telecounseling programs and focus on preventative services.
Many state governments have enacted emergency executive orders that now allow mental health service providers to work remotely across state lines.

Through telecounseling, colleges and universities should also offer alternative methods of delivery, such as group counseling.

3. Engage faculty and academic advising staff.
Faculty should embed mental health supports in their courses by adding health modules to learning management systems and listing mental health resources on their syllabi.

These actions can destigmatize mental health disorders and increase the likelihood students will seek treatment.

Prioritizing student mental health
Students surveyed say they hope mental health care will be a campus priority to help them “recover from current national turmoil,” including COVID and a new awareness of systemic racism, according to research by Active Minds, an advocacy group.

Four out of five college students have experienced stress, anxiety, sadness, isolation and other emotional distress during COVID, with 20% reporting that their mental health has significantly worsened, Active Minds found.

The organization offers short and long-term recommendations for improving campus mental health care, such as:

1. Include student leaders on campus COVID-19 task forces. Research shows that student involvement in mental health policy decisions and program increases awareness and usage of campus health services.

2. Adapt and innovate mental health services. High-risk individuals and groups, particularly students with marginalized identities, may not seek

MENTAL HEALTH CARE SUPPORT CRUCIAL FOR COLLEGE ATHLETES

Empty stadiums. Abandoned locker rooms. Scrapped schedules.
The loss of camaraderie. The potential loss of scholarships. And an uncertain future. With COVID disrupting competition at all levels, students will need support and space to express and process their feelings, says Dr. Jan Hall, executive director of mental health at TimelyMD, a telehealth provider.

Higher ed institutions could provide a psychologist in the athletic department, or athletic directors and coaches can encourage stopping in at the counseling center or getting support via telehealth.

According to the nonprofit Athletes for Hope, 35% of professional athletes experience some form of mental health crisis. While nearly 30% of the pros reach out for assistance, college athletes only seek help 10% of the time.

Student-athletes are particularly vulnerable right now, since many schools opted not to play this season and with championships being canceled for Division I, II and III schools, Hall says.

Questions such as these can be part of motivational messages:
• How do you live life when adversity is in your face?
• How do you develop the internal strength to deal with things that you never plan on?

University leaders, athletic directors and coaches help students understand that anxiety, sadness and uncertainty are normal feelings by reminding students they are still part of a team.

“It’s important for coaches to continue that team spirit, to continue to huddle, to continue allowing students to connect with each other because there are bonds there, sometimes lifelong bonds,” Hall says. —Chris Burt
services on their own. Administrators should increase outreach and provide mental health resources in diverse formats, such as embedded clinicians in residence halls, support groups, clinical support, peer support and self-care practices.

3. Develop a clear, comprehensive communications plan. Active Minds’ survey found students had concerns around uncertainty about academic accommodations and the availability of mental health resources.

4. Support staff and faculty well-being. Leaders may want to consider realigning expectations for productivity and increasing flexibility. Adjusting timelines for tenure, reappointment and the evaluation and promotion process may ease some stress and anxiety.

5. Conduct surveys and studies to inform decision-making. Campus leaders should use surveys and participate in national studies to assess the effectiveness of their mental health programs.

6. Ensure equal access to health care. Students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and low-income students have been disproportionately impacted emotionally. When analyzing data, leaders should disaggregate by populations to ensure that all students are benefiting from mental health programs and services.

7. Maintain opportunities for students to connect socially. Students want to engage with peers virtually through student organizations, social networking and other shared experiences.

Bonding in tumultuous times
Some campuses have suggested that students form small COVID pods while other colleges are asking students only to take masks off when they are with their roommates.

Administrators should make it clear that large gatherings, such as homecoming, will likely be canceled but should return next school year.

“This is the year for administrators to encourage students to form small, close, deep friendships, and say, ‘This is not the year for you to go to giant tailgating events.’ We have to put those on pause,” says Wong, Loyola’s counseling director.

For students in New Orleans, she uses the example of the lure of Mardi Gras and the bars on Bourbon Street. Risk reduction behavior means conveying the idea to young people that COVID is a marathon, not a sprint, she says.

“We’re telling students, ‘You’re here for four years, you’re going to get three more Mardi Gras,’” Wong says. “We have to say, ‘Skip Bourbon Street for a minute. It’s still going to be there. We have to stay away so there’s something to return to.’”

As for dating, Wong has seen students going on socially distanced walks and connecting virtually. COVID-era rules such as prohibiting guests in residence halls are likely putting a dent in the more promiscuous “hook-up” culture that had taken hold on some college campuses.

“An unseen side effect,” says Wong, “is people taking a little bit more time to get to know each other.”

Matt Zalaznick is senior writer.

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A linchpin in San Jose City College’s bilingual outreach to its students is “Dia de la Familia,” or “Family Day.”

Students of the two-year college and their family members get a bilingual tour the UC Santa Cruz campus to better understand the transfer process, financial aid and other key components of the four-year college experience.

“We want to address parental anxiety about seeing their child go on to a four-year college,” says Elizabeth Gonzalez, the college’s grant manager for Title V Hispanic-serving initiatives. “It’s uncharted territory for parents, and communicating in their native language is essential when talking about things like finance and having students move out. It builds trust.”

The entire program, which has been funded by a Hispanic-Serving Institution grant the college received in 2015, is offered bilingually.

While most of the college’s admissions and financial aids staff are bilingual, parents can also request headsets to listen to interpreters translate presentations by non-bilingual speakers into Spanish.

San Jose City College’s efforts represent an increasing number of initiatives by which colleges nationwide are connecting with students and their families in their native languages.

By Matt Zalaznick

BILINGUAL BOOST

How colleges connect with students and their families in their native languages, in and outside the classroom

NATIVE-LANGUAGE CONNECTIONS—San Jose City College’s efforts to provide more services bilingually are part of a growing movement in higher ed.
Bilingual programs meet demand

Milwaukee Area Technical College is expanding courses and degree programs it offers bilingually and in Spanish, as it strives for designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

The college stands out among institutions in Wisconsin for its bilingual associate’s degrees that prepare students for dental and medical assistant jobs, and an early childhood education degree taught entirely in Spanish, says Wilma Bonaparte, the president’s liaison for the school’s Hispanic-Serving initiative.

“We want to create an environment where our students feel welcome, where they feel a sense of belonging,” says Bonaparte, noting that the Hispanic community is the only population growing steadily in the Milwaukee area.

The college has added new scholarships to its effort reach the 25% Hispanic undergraduate enrollment threshold that would qualify it as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Hispanic enrollment at the school has grown from 16.7% in 2016 to 20.6% this year.

The college provides orientations, career exploration, tutoring and test proctoring bilingually and in Spanish, and has opened a satellite campus in the heart of the city’s Hispanic community.

“Retention is improving because more resources have been developed,” Bonaparte says. “We’ve translated our website, some of our services and marketing into Spanish, and the student is responding, and enrollment is increasing.”

Among the challenges of offering more and more degree programs and courses bilingually is hiring faculty that can translate course materials into Spanish, Bonaparte explains.

“These faculty are sometimes doing double the work because the curriculum is issued to them in English,” she says.

In the last few years, college leaders have also developed a cultural competency campaign for faculty and staff.

“Sometimes, just a simple gesture, a non-verbal cue or comment can be perceived like we are not welcome,” Bonaparte says. “We cannot allow that, particularly in education, which creates upward mobility for our community.”

Reversing COVID enrollment trends

COVID has caused a drop in Hispanic student enrollment at SUNY Orange, as it has at many other schools, and the community college plans to use grant funding to reverse the trend.

The school, where Hispanic enrollment has been as high as 30% in recent years, was just awarded a $2.94 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Hispanic Serving Institutions Program.

What to consider offering in multiple languages or having bilingual staff deliver

- Campus tours
- Admissions outreach
- Student orientation
- Family orientation
- Career exploration services
- Tutoring
- Test proctoring
- Website copy
- Degree programs
- Individual courses
- Financial aid services
- Parent presentations
grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program.

College leaders plan to add more bilingual student services, among other initiatives, says Erika Hackman, vice president for academic affairs.

“What we’re seeing is that students of color are the largest group that’s not coming back to us,” Hackman says. “This grant is an excellent timely opportunity for us to figure out new ways to reach out to that population and provide the wraparound supports to help students get started and finish.”

This academic year, about 25% of the SUNY Orange college population identifies as Hispanic. Administrators intend to use the grant funding to “amplify and accelerate” guided pathways at the college in an effort to increase engagement, persistence and completion, Hackman says.

SUNY Orange first launched its pathways program two years ago, and now plans to incorporate more bilingual services into onboarding programs and the school’s new academic coaching initiative, Hackman says.

Campus surveys have shown students are generally satisfied with the instructional supports but want more help with financial planning, time management, and other similar skills, Hackman says.

“These skills are hallmarks of the types of support academic coaches are trained to provide,” Hackman adds.

The school is also going to launch a bilingual family orientation program called “Juntos,” which means “together” in Spanish. The idea came when administrators noticed how engaged families were in the campus tours given in English and Spanish by a bilingual admissions counselor.

“We want to bring families into the education experience and have them intentionally connected to it,” Hackman says.

The grant will also fund deeper analysis into student success data to pinpoint the gaps in outcomes and to provide cultural-responsiveness training for faculty and staff.

“Sometimes it’s the small choices that unintentionally miss the opportunity to connect with students,” Hackman says. “We know that when students see themselves in the text and examples that are used in classroom learning, it motivates them to stay and complete the course.”

Bilingual boost for parents

Dalton State College, the only Hispanic-Serving Institution located in Georgia, focuses its bilingual efforts on outreach to parents, explains Jodi S. Johnson, Dalton State’s vice president for student affairs and enrollment management.

Students have to be proficient in English to enroll, but the college provides a range of services to parents in Spanish, including financial aid workshops and orientation sessions.

Staff at the institution are now working to translate its entire website into Spanish, Johnson says.

The college also received a Title V Hispanic-serving grant last year to improve retention and graduation rates. The college has used the funding to create an academic coaching program and to expand tutoring and supplemental instruction.

The academic coaches will help students decide on their majors or switch majors if they are struggling in their initial choice, Johnson says.

“We had to reach out to the community,” Johnson adds. “We couldn’t sit back and expect them to come to us.”

Matt Zalaznick is UB’s senior writer.
Meeting the unique needs of continuing education programs

Q&A with Alex Arthur, V.P. of Sales and Marketing, Orbund

Why are more institutions emphasizing continuing education programs?
There is a growing need because of Generation Y and Z students. The number of students applying to traditional schools year-over-year is declining, so many institutions need to find a new way of attracting students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, prior to COVID-19, enrollments to post-secondary institutions was expected to drop by 6%. On the other hand, distance education in 2020 is expected to grow to 12.78 million, up from 6.9 million in 2018, almost doubling in just 2 years. So many institutions are looking to reach this new market.

Why are continuing education programs so appealing to nontraditional students?
Generation Z students are different than previous generations. These students want more flexibility and want to be able to progress at their own pace. At the same time, the Baby Boomer generation and Generation Y students need advanced education in specific courses to be able to progress in their careers. By offering a flexible way for students to take classes in a comfortable environment and at their own pace, continuing education programs appeal to each of these generations, hence the increase in the nontraditional student population.

What are the unique needs of continuing education programs when it comes to a student information system (SIS)?
One of the key characteristics of Generation Z is the desire for flexibility and having the ability to get information whenever they want it. These students want to have all the information they need right in the student portal connected to the SIS. The student needs to be able to register at any time for any class, for example. A system that can provide up-to-date information and a high level of flexibility is essential for an SIS supporting a school’s continuing education program.

Why is it important that an SIS be cloud-based?
Generation Z students want to have immediate access to information. This empowers the student and helps them make better decisions. With Generation Z students being scattered all over the world, having the system in an environment that allows for easy access from anywhere

Orbund provides a flexible, fully featured cloud-based SIS that includes unique capabilities that meet the unique needs of continuing education programs. To learn more, go to Orbund.com
makes a lot of difference. Secondly, using a cloud-based SIS enables the institute to focus on using the product, as the SaaS provider takes care of the means of delivering the product. With the school now just focused on delivering the product they can make sure they meet the needs of students.

If an institution already has an SIS, why should they consider implementing a separate unique SIS just for continuing education programs?
Most institutions have already invested millions of dollars in an SIS to serve the needs of the whole college or university. However in most cases, continuing education is a comparatively small department and certainly not the main focus of the school. Also, continuing education programs typically have unique characteristics and needs, such as attendance tracking and externship management, as well as compliance and other reporting requirements. These are features you will not find in the big student information systems, and replacing the entire SIS to add these features is expensive and time consuming.

A more effective strategy is to find a smaller solution that has the features required to support continuing education and that integrates into the parent system.

This way, the parent system can report the big picture of the financial outlook of the school, while the continuing education SIS tracks attendance and handles other specific functions.

What features should higher ed leaders look for in an SIS?
There are standard features all SIS systems have such as lead management, documenting of interactions with the student, ledger card management, enrollment management, retention and attrition management.

However, there are specific features that a continuing education program requires such as attendance tracking, externship management, and placement management and tracking. These features are key to the licensure of the continuing education program, so it is very important that an institution with a continuing education program have an SIS with these features as well.
NO-CONTACT CAMPUS

BY MELISSA EZARIK

Options for helping students, staff and visitors avoid touching shared surfaces and interacting face-to-face

From apps that place dining orders and mobile devices that open handle-less building doors to intelligent lockers for mailroom package pickup and alternative ways of activating classroom AV, options abound for colleges looking to reduce the need for one-on-one contact and the prevalence of having to touch shared surfaces. While the purchase of touchless technology isn’t front-and-center in campus reopening plans, leaders at higher ed institutions are seeking such approaches for every corner of campus—and those with solutions already in place could open up this year with greater peace-of-mind.

“There is a great deal of interest in going more contactless,” says Gary Link, chief business development officer at E&I Cooperative Services, the member-owned nonprofit purchasing cooperative serving education. Since the pandemic shut campuses down, members have reached out to E&I staff and vendors for products and services that can achieve efficiencies and also involve less or no contact, Link adds.

Some alternatives to high-touch surfaces and face-to-face services are more readily available from higher ed providers than others. With classroom technology, a long-time objective has been “the idea of walking into a classroom and—bam!—everything turns on,” says Keith Fowlkes, vice president of the technology category for E&I and former CIO at three higher ed institutions, most recently Centre College in Kentucky. Touchless AV has been a concept for many years, but development has been slow, offerings are costly, and connections are not 100% reliable, he says. “I know a lot of people looking at touchless AV. I know even more who are wondering how they can pay for it.”

Instead, the main pandemic discussion among higher ed AV teams has been how to best clean touchscreens and cover devices with materials that won’t transmit infection as easily, he says. “It’s expensive to move to all touchless AV.”

Regardless of cost, campus leaders are certainly thinking a lot about ways to make life involve less contact with surfaces and people, as COVID is here for now and will impact future behaviors. Read on to see how and where such items and services are cropping up on campus.

CONTACTLESS CREDENTIALS

USER EXPERIENCE: Rather than constantly swiping a campus card, students use their mobile device as an ID for building access, dining, library transactions, campus store purchases, laundry, vending, ticketing and more.

SOME PROVIDERS: Allegion, Transact, CBORD, TouchNet, IdentiSys, HID Global

SAFE DEPLOYMENT: Credentials can be pushed out to students without in-person interaction, significantly decreasing the number of students needing to drop by the campus card office.

OPTION IN ACTION: The University of Tennessee, Knoxville had selected a mobile credentials solution through Allegion the semester before COVID hit the U.S. When the campus shut down, says Director of Operational Services Bill Strickland, “We were situated very well with the mobile credentials. ...the timing was perfect even though the circumstances were not. The timing was perfect even though the circumstances were not.” With summer orientation sessions converted to a virtual format, “students didn’t want to come to campus just to pick up an ID card, and to be honest we didn’t want them to either,” he says. “We were trying to keep campus traffic as limited as possible.” Transactions via the iPhone and Apple Watch have totaled more than 4.3 million so far.

SHARE: UBmag.me/contactless
TOUCHLESS CLASSROOM AV

USER EXPERIENCE: Connect a personal device via software to AV devices in the classroom and control them from there.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION: Some classroom tech can be activated with facial recognition software, which may alleviate IT security concerns about a personal device being used for the connection but result in user privacy worries.

SOME PROVIDERS: Mersive, Aveo Systems, Crestron, Extron, AtlasIED

TOUCHLESS INTERACTIVE DIGITAL SIGNAGE

USER EXPERIENCE: An individual triggers additional content on the screen by speaking, pointing, shifting eye gaze, or making a hand wave motion, depending on software choice.

SOME PROVIDERS: Videotel Digital, Visix, SigmaSense, Arreya Digital Signage, Mad Systems, Matrox

TOUCHLESS BUILDING ACCESS

USER EXPERIENCE: Instead of keys or other tools requiring touching a door, facilities access is gained through a campus card or credentials on a mobile device; some interior and exterior doors may be designed without handles for even less contact, and exiting the door can be via a no-touch exit device.

29% Respondents to an August UB survey (sponsored by access control technology provider SALTO Systems) who said their institution was considering or implementing touchless/contactless building access systems at their school in light of COVID

PROVIDER HIGHLIGHT: Johnson Controls’ new Tyco Illustra Insight access management system includes a facial recognition camera. Enabled by artificial intelligence and deep learning algorithms, the solution is appropriate for high-security areas on campus.

CONTACTLESS PACKAGE RETRIEVAL

USER EXPERIENCE: A student gets an alert about a package and can then retrieve it from an unmanned bank of intelligent lockers using a QR code or student ID; locker banks are often located throughout campus rather than just at the mail center for convenience and further reduced contact.

SOME PROVIDERS: Ricoh USA Inc., Amazon, TZ SMArt Lockers

OPTION IN ACTION: Clemson University (S.C.) worked with Ricoh USA Inc. to get more than 500 intelligent lockers installed across campus this fall. During move-in week, student wait time at the mail center decreased by 13%, since 1,400+ packages were delivered to the lockers. “While this project was planned pre-COVID, having intelligent lockers is proving to have multiple benefits for our students this year,” says Lori Brierre, strategic operations director for procurement and business services. A student can see how many others are at the lockers at any given time and wait to approach when social distancing can be accomplished.

CONTACTLESS DINING

27% Students surveyed by Aramark this summer who said the ability to order food using an online app WILL ENTICE THEM to participate in meal plans this fall

50% Students surveyed by Nutrislice in the spring who said they would be MORE LIKELY to get food from an on-campus dining venue that offers digital ordering and payment options

30% Students who said they planned to AVOID any on-campus dining venue that doesn’t offer both digital ordering and payment options

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS: Besides digital ordering, contactless dining can include smart takeout lockers, pop-up locations for food pickup and robotic food delivery.

OPTION IN ACTION: The University of Tulsa launched the Transact Mobile Ordering app this fall as part of its safe dining plan. Ordering in advance eliminates “lines and the awkwardness of ordering while wearing a mask,” says Melissa France, associate vice president for campus services. Students receive notification when the meal is ready.
How higher education is creating smarter, more connected campuses

A new survey developed in partnership between CommScope and University Business (UB) asked higher education leaders about how they are using Smart Campus technologies, including ubiquitous wi-fi internet access, smart facilities, mobile technologies and more. The survey was deployed to the UB audience in October 2020 and some 253 higher education leaders participated.

Importance of reliable wi-fi

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of reliable, ubiquitous internet connectivity to their campus communities, on a scale of 1-5 stars with 5 being “Extremely important.” When asked how important this was to their students, the average was 4.9 stars, while the importance to faculty was rated an average of 4.7 stars.

When asked how easy it was to connect to reliable wi-fi inside campus buildings at their institution, 60% of respondents selected the answer “Easy most of the time; occasional problems,” acknowledging that there are some challenges with meeting these expectations from students and faculty.

The Smart Campus

Respondents were asked to identify which Smart Campus technologies their institution is currently using, selecting all that apply from a list. The three leading answers were “Infrastructure: Internet-connected utilities, buildings, campus as a whole” at 75%, “Security: Internet-connected surveillance cameras, alarms, facilities access control” at 70%, and “Mobile payments” at 56%.

Which of these Smart Campus technologies is your institution currently using?

- 75% Infrastructure: Internet-connected utilities, buildings, campus as a whole
- 70% Security: Internet-connected surveillance cameras, alarms, facilities access control
- 56% Mobile payments
- 53% Smart buildings: Internet-connected HVAC, lighting, water controls
- 43% Mobile student ID/credentials
- 30% Asset/technology tracking and management
- 28% Internet-connected transit and/or parking applications
The next question presented respondents with the same list of technologies and asked which would most benefit their institutions, if they weren’t already using them. The leading answers were “Mobile student ID/credentials” at 54%, “Asset/technology tracking and management” at 47% and “Security: Internet-connected surveillance cameras, alarms, facilities access control” at 30%.

Respondents were then asked specifically if their institution would benefit from having campus utilities (lighting, power, water, climate control) and other infrastructure connected to the internet as part of a Smart Campus, providing real-time monitoring and automation, and improving efficiency. 66% of respondents said Yes, with 28% saying “Definitely.” Another 23% said “We already have this capability,” while just 11% said No.

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**Which of these Smart Campus technologies (that you don’t already use) do you think would most benefit your institution?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile student ID/credentials</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset/technology tracking and management</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security: Internet-connected surveillance cameras, alarms, facilities access control</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile payments</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smart buildings: Internet-connected HVAC, lighting, water controls</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure: Internet-connected utilities, buildings, campus as a whole</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet-connected transit and/or parking applications</td>
<td>21%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Campus asset management**

When asked to describe how their institution monitors, manages and tracks the use of campus buildings, rooms and assets, by far, the top two answers were “Mostly manual processes, with some recently-added digital tools” at 44% and “Mostly digital processes, but still requiring some manual processes and tasks” at 43%.

Another 9% selected “ Entirely manual processes and tasks that haven’t changed in many years,” while just 3% said “Entirely digital process, with sophisticated automation and remote management capabilities.”

“It’s no surprise that students and faculty expect and depend on ubiquitous wi-fi internet access on campus,” says Rich Nedwich, Global Director of Education at CommScope. “But always meeting these expectations can be a challenge. As the survey found, an increasing number of institutions are creating more connected campuses through a variety of technologies. By using a powerful, reliable network infrastructure to create a Smart Campus, colleges and universities can improve learning, productivity, efficiency, convenience and safety.”
PROFESSIONAL OPINION

‘Back to normal’ should not be the post-pandemic goal

It’s not just the way higher education is delivered that needs a total change; it’s our entire approach to advanced education.

By Emily Barnes

I don’t want to go back to normal. I have worked in higher ed for 15 years and from day one, the establishment has asked the same questions. What are we selling? What makes a quality university experience?

In the COVID era, we are seeing that not all campuses are created equal, and the ones that will stand the test of this trying time, and beyond, are those that innovate and embrace multi-level education.

While we’ve been building state-of-the-art facilities, we’ve forgotten to build state-of-the-art education.

The pandemic has shone a spotlight on the failings of higher ed. The quality of online education is not good, yet it could be. Remove the dorms, snack bars and Olympic-sized pools and what most colleges are left with are mediocre, traditionalist teachers talking online—and students who are not listening.

No wonder parents don’t want to pay for an all-online college! Their students are disengaged and bored, despite the advanced technologies. We see clearly that a college education was more about experience and fun than learning. Employers concur. And it isn’t the fault of the student of today wants and deserves an active, engaged classroom experience, regardless of where that classroom is.

There’s another problem with higher ed that COVID is making clear: We’ve turned our campuses into circuses rather than esteemed loci of learning.

Our society expects the ‘movie version’ of college. And since society expects the status quo—bells and whistles, perks and parties—we believe we have to offer those as selling points. We should instead be selling a quality education that transforms young people into productive, ambitious adults.

So I don’t want us to go back to the way things were before the pandemic. I want us to break this model once and for all, and transform higher ed into what it can be—what it must be—to survive.

Since society expects bells and whistles, perks and parties, we believe we have to offer those as selling points.

New priorities and approaches
COVID is forcing us to live and work in new ways, and it is a breath of fresh air. We prioritize health and family wellness; we are more relaxed with scheduling. We service students over video and engage more personably on the phone. We are cleaner. Why did it take a pandemic for us to wash our hands?

We create staff coffee Zooms to connect. We have more attendance when orientation is virtual; graduate residencies are highly enjoyable online. We may be relegated to our homes, but we have access, thanks to technology. And while enjoying newfound free time, we have more time with the people dearest to us. We are outside, walking and talking.

It’s not just the way higher ed is delivered that needs a total change; it’s our entire approach to advanced education.

‘Back to normal’ is a clarion call to be regressive in our thinking. Do we want to go back to a time when being human came last? The pandemic has caused significant disruption, but not all disruption is bad. Change can be good and, if embraced, can lead to innovation.

We are creating strategies to engage students and build bonds over distance. This is the purpose of a university, to lead the charge into new terrain and function as an innovative change agent that boldly goes to new frontiers for the benefit of all.

In higher ed, COVID-19 has brought more consciousness and connection, which could forever transform our landscape—if we are brave enough to let it and strong enough to follow through.

Emily Barnes is provost and interim president of Cleary University in Howell, Mich.
Dear Reader,

I am pleased to present UB’s 2020 edition of “Leading the Way,” our annual special advertising section where we highlight success stories about innovative solutions for colleges and universities.

This year, “Leading the Way” features articles sponsored by Blackboard, ExamSoft, Orchard Software, TouchNet and Watermark. These pieces examine the providers’ successful solutions and the strong partnerships they have cultivated with schools across the U.S.

“Leading the Way” is just one of UB’s many resources delving into the processes of college and university administration. Keep up to date with UB in print and online at universitybusiness.com. There, you can subscribe to our free e-newsletters, read the latest higher education news, and watch engaging web seminars with higher ed thought leaders and solution providers. As institutions across the nation have been impacted by COVID-19, we’re also putting extra focus on highlighting interesting and innovative ideas that we hope will help you make informed decisions, so check back often.

I look forward to your continued engagement with UB in print, online and, hopefully, in person in 2021.

Sincerely,

Eric Weiss
Executive Editor
IT Help Desk Services
Build institutional success through comprehensive IT Help Desk capabilities.

- 1,200+ agents
- 350+ clients
- 8 million interactions per year
- 90% satisfaction rate
- 115+ Applications Supported
- 1,200+ agents
- 350+ clients
- 8 million interactions per year
- 90% satisfaction rate
- millions of users served

Capabilities:
- 24X7 Live Support
- Faculty, Staff, and Students
- Multi-Modal Support Channels
- Knowledge Management
- U.S. Based Staffing
How AI and chatbots can power institutional and student success

Q&A with Daniel Woodcock, Director, Product Management, Blackboard

Why are more institutions using chatbots and AI to respond to a variety of support requests?
Institutions are utilizing chatbots to respond to support requests due to a number of factors:
- Budgets and resources are continuing to face constraints for support departments, causing institutions to have to do more with less
- Support requests continue to rise, especially during COVID-19
- Support requests are often repetitive, or could be resolved easily with a Frequently Asked Questions guide
- The need to provide 24/7 support as students operate in an online capacity and interact with more technology across the institution

What are some of the benefits to institutions and their user communities from using chatbots in this capacity?
Institutions who adopt chatbots can provide impactful results fast. At Blackboard, we've launched a number of chatbots where we've seen tremendous impact from:
- An average of 30% of support interactions being handled by the bot. This frees up a significant amount of time for the support staff to focus on strategic objectives or more complex inquiries.
- The chatbot answers and responds in a matter of seconds. An end user doesn't have to be put on hold for a long period of time or have to go through complex methods of getting support. The chatbot quickly addresses the support need.
- The chatbot is answering at all times of the day, resulting in reduced burden for support staff to answer questions the next day and improving the end user experience as their inquiry is answered in the moment of need.

Why is it beneficial to have a chatbot be integrated into the LMS?
A chatbot integrated within the LMS provides an institution with the ability to provide support within the application. Often, end users have difficulty finding the support they need in the online environment, and this can result in students contacting the instructor for help, who often feels unequipped to provide the technical assistance needed. The bot within the LMS gives an easier venue for students and faculty to get the support they need, and with a customized and personalized experience.

Why should institutions consider migrating to a SaaS-based LMS?
A SaaS-based LMS helps to provide a more reliable, secure, and up-to-date learning management system for institutions. As a SaaS-based institution, you get updates regularly to the environment that enhance the teaching and learning experience.

How can schools better leverage technology and AI to power institutional and student success?
Technology continues to be crucial when it comes to institutional and student success. Whether it is engaging prospective and current students with the power of data and artificial intelligence, or gaining powerful insights into the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies, an AI-enabled institution will reap significant benefits of success for students and the institution as a whole.

To learn more, go to Blackboard.com/services
Share this story online at UBmag.me/Bb
Medical school eases growing pains with technology

Leicester Medical School adopts iPads and ExamSoft platform for flexibility in assessments

In 2013, seeking to create a consistent and equitable experience for all students, Leicester Medical School decided to go to a 1:1 iPad per student system. With this provision, faculty knew students could be learning from anywhere, anytime. Faculty and students could interact quickly and easily. Content can also be rapidly revised and personalized. Essentially, with school-issued iPads, all of the resources students need are at their fingertips – including exams.

During this time, Leicester Medical School was growing significantly and facing some of the challenges that come with a larger student population. One of those issues was the use of paper exams. As the Medical School made the decision to switch to computer-based testing, it faced another challenge – booking computer labs for exams.

Software Solution

Being a technology-driven and environmentally conscious school, the School sought an exam-taking solution that would allow the use of their 1:1 iPads. As a paperless, high-security test-taking system that works on iPads and therefore allows more flexibility in exams than having to book and configure many computer labs, ExamSoft addressed many of the School’s highest priorities. Leicester Medical School adopted ExamSoft in early 2014.

Shortly after adopting ExamSoft, Leicester brought on an accomplished expert to spearhead the new technology efforts. Terese Bird joined Leicester Medical School as an educational designer in 2014. While working at the Medical School, Terese completed her master’s degree, focusing her dissertation on the impact of educational technology. She specifically studied ExamSoft’s exam-taking application, Examplify, and discovered that students performed better and achieved higher levels of learning according to Bloom’s Taxonomy when formative quizzes were delivered through Examplify.

Real Results

After implementing ExamSoft, Leicester started to see some meaningful benefits.

The School estimates saving at least £4,500 yearly on paper and printing costs. Additionally, the School has saved considerable staff costs in time and hassle by eliminating the paper-based exam process.
Historically, in many higher education institutions, exam panels manually, statistically review exams. Leicester Medical School is now able to review items individually and assess them using real performance data.

For years, Leicester used the Strengths & Opportunities reports for formative exams. The reports gave students immediate and detailed feedback on areas of strength and specific areas to continue working on.

**Going Forward**

Leicester aspires over the next academic year to expand its use of ExamSoft and are considering applying it to objective structured clinical exams (OSCEs). ExamSoft’s rubrics allow faculty to collect the same familiar assessment metrics during subjective assessments, but by digitizing it, faculty have a more efficient way to identify deficiencies, provide feedback to students, standardize expectations to make assessments more objective, and have a complete picture of clinical and classroom performance.

Having goals for the future and constantly evaluating opportunities to improve the student experience and efficacy of instruction is what Leicester Medical School strives to do.

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Visit examsoft.com/leicester to view the full case study

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UNIVERSITY CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Orchard Software Partners with Purdue University for COVID-19 Testing

Purdue Adds Human Testing to Support Pandemic Efforts on Campus and Across the State

To provide a safe environment for students and faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic and expand testing capacity across the state, the Indiana ADDL, part of Purdue’s College of Veterinary Medicine, is working with Orchard Software to increase the capacity to perform and report COVID-19 tests for human patients. The ADDL received CLIA certification to conduct human diagnostic testing, with Parkview Health providing clinical oversight and Orchard providing connectivity and testing management tools. In addition, to promote timely result reporting, the ADDL has partnerships with the Indiana State Department of Health and Indiana hospitals.

Advanced Workflow and Integration Expertise Support Universities

To support Purdue’s goals for rapid COVID-19 laboratory test ordering and reporting, Orchard will provide a cloud-based solution with an advanced workflow process engine to assist with laboratory workflows, specimen tracking, case management, and administrative reports. Orchard’s integration expertise will enable automated orders from the Protect Purdue Health Center and other referring facilities as well as rapid result transmission to hospital EHRs and to the Indiana State Department of Health.

Orchard’s Products Enable Greater Reach for Universities

Collaboration with Orchard Software aids the ADDL in its contribution to help address the COVID-19 public health crisis. Dr. Craig Bowen, assistant ADDL director, says,
“This agreement [with Orchard] will provide the software platform that we will use to manage our laboratory information for all of the COVID testing. The program will create the accession numbers, track the samples through the lab, connect to the testing equipment, and provide the capability to send necessary reports as part of the testing process.”

This effort does not diminish the ADDL’s diagnostic support for animal health and the safety of the food supply, which remains its first priority.

**About Orchard Software Corporation**

Orchard Software Corporation is a leader in the laboratory information system industry and offers a variety of laboratory system solutions, including a SaaS model. Orchard serves more than 2,000 laboratories across the country, helping them improve efficiency, reduce errors, and enhance integration.

Orchard’s products are installed in physician groups and clinics, hospitals, independent reference labs, student health centers, veterinary labs, public health organizations, universities, and retail facilities. For more information regarding Orchard Software Corporation, visit [www.orchardsoft.com](http://www.orchardsoft.com).
The Path to a Safer Campus is Contactless

Make the transition with help from TouchNet

Helping customers expedite unexpected refunds. Transitioning our delivery method for emergency training and information. Building new apps to improve social distancing and campus safety. We’ve spent much of 2020 helping schools transition to a ContactlessCampus™.

Whether you’re evaluating existing technologies or taking the next step toward contactless payments and credentials, TouchNet can help you find the solution you need to make campus safer and keep students focused on learning.

Learn more at contactlesscampus.com
Connecting and Keeping Students Safe on a Contactless Campus

When COVID-19 hit, the province of Alberta in Canada released public health orders that forced University of Alberta leaders to move most of their fall courses online to ensure students and staff remained safe. The university limits on-campus learning to courses that require in-person instruction, such as fine arts, dentistry, and physical therapy.

“Our initial question was, ‘How do we make our students feel part of the university community when they may never even set foot on campus?’” says Jennifer McNeill, who manages the system’s use of TouchNet OneCard, a mobile-based technology that combines student ID functionality, electronic payment processing, and access control.

The university quickly added the OneCard app so students could have virtual student ID credentials. “We would not have been able to develop something like that ourselves within a short period of time,” says McNeill. “But TouchNet has their own mobile app that we could brand to help our students who are studying remotely identify with the campus, get access to student discounts, and prove their identification when they’re writing exams.”

Providing facility access remotely

Even though a majority of courses are online, students, staff, and researchers still need access to campus buildings that remain locked due to inactivity. Through OneCard, the university was able to quickly produce credentials which helped control and change access to campus buildings, even from a remote location.

“TouchNet has their own mobile app that we could brand to help our students who are studying remotely identify with the campus, get access to student discounts, and prove their identification when they’re writing exams.”

Minimizing food waste and reducing interaction

OneCard provides hourly and daily reports of students who make plans to eat at particular dining halls so staff can prepare enough food without being wasteful. Staff also use this data to limit how many students can enter certain facilities to comply with safety and social distancing standards.

“We weren’t taking photos in our office so we needed to ensure that we had a system where we could securely receive our visitors’ photos,” says McNeill. “ID verification allows us to confirm online that visitors are who they say they are.”

Students can buy meal plans on our website, and they’re immediately added to their card,” says McNeill. “It’s very convenient and reduces that in-person interaction with cashiers. It’s just tap and enter.”

Making informed decisions

While currently used in response to COVID, the data that OneCard receives and generates could be later utilized to increase student retention and success. “We are receiving a ton of information from OneCard,” says McNeill. “It would be a tremendous value if we could later process and see how we can use this data to improve the student experience and institutional success overall.”

For more information, go to TouchNet.com
It’s Time to Get More from Your Data

While campuses look different this term, we know your goals remain the same.

The problem is that the data you need to achieve your goals is disconnected, living in countless databases, paper binders, and people’s heads across campus. **Now is the time to unlock new opportunities for faculty and students through connected data.**

Watermark’s integrated platform brings together assessment, student feedback, faculty activity reporting, and curriculum review processes so you can make data-informed decisions to improve outcomes for every student.

In a recent survey of over 850 faculty and academic leaders:

- **91%** have the same or increased prioritization of student learning assessment in Fall 2020.
- **87%** place a high priority on student feedback to provide insight into the curriculum and student experience.
- **85%** have the same or increasing concerns around collecting evidence for accreditation.
- **43%** are facing challenges documenting curriculum review & revisions.
- **53%** faced challenges managing the 2019-2020 tenure & review process.

Move from disconnected data to educational intelligence.

Howest University of Applied Sciences Doubles Survey Participation Rates with EvaluationKIT

The challenge
When Howest University of Applied Sciences adopted Canvas in 2018, they quickly realized their outdated, university-developed survey and evaluation tool could work harder for the Belgian university. With some students attending in-person classes across seven campuses in three cities and others completing courses online, Howest needed to make evaluations and surveys easily accessible within their learning management system.

The solution
“We already had digital surveys in place, but EvaluationKIT offered more options and possibilities than our previous tool. It’s very user-friendly for the students, there are different ways to communicate with them, and they can take the survey on their mobile phones as well,” said Sanne Tanghe, Quality Assurance at Howest. Today, all 7,500 Howest students complete course evaluations and general surveys through EvaluationKIT.

The wins
Improving response rates: EvaluationKIT’s pop-ups and reminders drove a 13% increase in Howest’s average response rate for course evaluations, and has significantly improved engagement with distance learning students. “It’s a difficult group to reach because they aren’t on campus a lot,” Tanghe said. “We used to have a response rate of only 25% for general surveys, but [this term’s] survey is still running and we have already reached 63%.”

Empowered faculty: Every person responsible for quality within a program can select which questions to ask from a predefined question bank, identify the course they want to evaluate, and when they want to launch the survey,” Tanghe said. Students are not required to complete course evaluations, but some instructors have been able to achieve over 90% response rates through candid communication. “The survey is much more visible thanks to the pop-ups and automatic reminders. Instructors motivate students by explaining why it’s important to the study program, and once they have the results they say, ‘We got feedback from the course evaluation and we will take this action,’” Tanghe said.

Multi-language support: We used to make one survey in Dutch and one in English, and have two different reports (that had to be manually combined). Now we only have to make one survey, where students can choose their own language. We have all the results in one report, which is very handy,” Tanghe said.

Real-time reporting: Instructors can immediately access course evaluation results in Canvas, and programs decide how and when to share results with students. The school uses data captured by EvaluationKIT to adjust course materials, programs, and content, and to guide quality improvement efforts.

Accessible support: “It’s nice that EvaluationKIT is always in development, and when we give feedback, an update follows. We are able to email Watermark support and already have a response the next day, which is handy because of the time difference,” Tanghe said.
Prioritizing virtual social interaction in student organizations

5 ways to encourage virtual student interaction to improve student mental health and overall academic success

By Charles Knippen

Face-to-face interaction is a big part of the college experience. Students create life-long friendships with their peers and often gain knowledge and experience from campus organizations that help them land a job post-graduation. With the COVID-19 pandemic rocking colleges across the country, university administrators and organizations have been forced to rethink how they conduct business without completely losing human interaction. At the same time, students are experiencing increased stress, anxiety and loneliness as a result of isolation and are looking to their universities for mental health support and safe ways to socially interact.

At the onset of the pandemic, The National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS) noticed its over one million members were in need of support. The organization created Live Online, a structured, interactive virtual experience with speakers, breakout sessions and networking opportunities—all critical parts of the NSLS program—in one easy-to-navigate location, so students had one less technology issue to stress about going into the new school year. This platform introduced a new way for student organizations to maintain engagement through virtual collaboration.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to navigating a crisis of this magnitude, administrators and organizations can prioritize and encourage virtual student interaction this school year.

1. Connect with students to know their needs
If you have created a virtual platform for your organizations or are in the process of doing so, be sure to connect with students about what they want, need and expect. Students often join organizations because they want to be among the company of like-minded individuals, and to feel a sense of belonging.

Transitioning to a virtual model is more than hosting weekly Zoom meetings or coffee hours; it’s about creating buy-in and trust. Get students involved in the planning process, and don’t stop involving them once the process has been created. Polls, surveys and one-on-one meetings can capture feedback.

2. Reimagine organizational structure
Weekly or bi-weekly in-person meetings are likely a thing of the past, for now. Organizational structure must support a virtual experience in order to keep student participation and social interaction active. With many students already struggling with stress and their mental health, administrators and organizations should strive to make the transition as seamless as possible. One way to do this is by sticking with virtual platforms—like Google Classroom and Blackboard—students use most in their classes in order to build on what is familiar and comfortable.

3. Provide proper tools and resources
Another way to alleviate stress on students is to provide the tools and resources needed to get involved with organizations and interact with other students on campus. Administrators and organizations should make sure to put out accurate and timely information as it relates to COVID-19 updates, upcoming meetings and resources. Whether it’s for a virtual networking hour or special speaker series, students will be looking to leaders for answers. If you can’t provide them with information that is easy to understand and access, you risk losing participation.

4. Plan virtual conferences and events
Student organizations play a critical role in professional growth. Often, students join groups with the expectation of building relationships, skills and experience that can be used in the workforce. Events are a large part of a student’s learning journey. The opportunity to learn and grow should not cease because in-person events have been canceled.

5. Continue to update and collaborate
COVID-19 cases continue to ebb and flow, and universities must frequently update not only safety protocols and procedures, but also the platforms being used. Collaborate with other departments, groups and even universities to find the methods that best work for your students.

In college, students make new friends, join organizations, work and live on campus, and often discover who they are as people. When crises like COVID-19 take away that very important aspect of social interaction, mental health and academics are ultimately at risk. So administrators and student organizations must prioritize emotional and social needs—and commit to creating opportunities for social interaction, despite any disruptions or challenges to the learning environment.

Charles Knippen is president of The National Society of Leadership and Success, the nation’s largest collegiate leadership honor society with more than one million members at 705 colleges nationwide.
Join a whole new higher ed conversation.

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Our companies have joined together as Anthology to give you a new voice in higher education. Find out more at anthologyinc.com

anthology
Advancing Knowledge
Payment technology for a smarter campus

“For us, security is a part of life. It’s not just in conversations with customers or quotes for an advertisement. It’s in our software, our processes, our culture — it’s who we are. We make sure your data is secure, so you can focus on what matters most: education. Because that’s what a partner does — and that’s what a partner deserves.”

– MIKE WALTERS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Secure Smarter

CampusCommerce.com/Secure