



**Inside
Higher
Ed**

The (More)-Digital Campus

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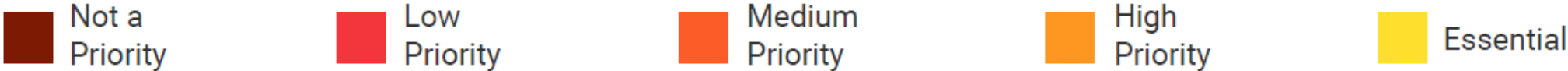


The Inexorable (but Slow and Partial) Drift to Digital

- Higher education has not transitioned as speedily or as fully as many other industries – that’s not (necessarily) a bad thing.
- It is (or will be) problematic if expectations from key constituents (learners, employees, employers, the public) outstrip colleges’ ability or willingness to shift.
- Is that happening? There are mixed signals.



Campus Leaders on Digital Transformation



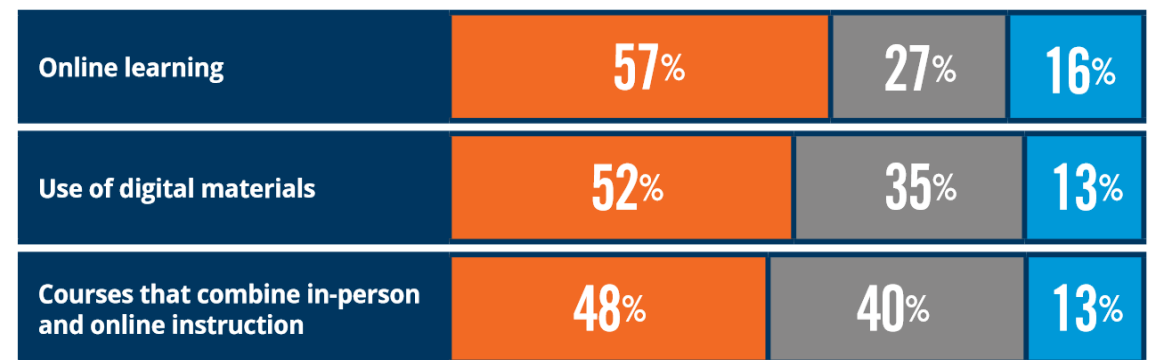
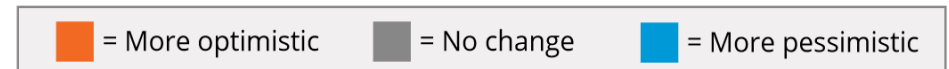
How much of a priority is digital transformation for leaders at your institution? (n=404)



Colleges Are Becoming More Digital: Teaching and Learning

- Entering the pandemic, >1/3 of all postsecondary students were studying either fully (17.5%) or partially (19.4%) online. For much of the 2010s, digital was the only segment of postsecondary enrollment to grow.
- Unclear exactly how much pandemic changed student behavior, but appears to have increased interest in the flexibility virtual learning offers.
- Faculty comfort with / interest in digital learning also seems to have increased – especially in integrating digital tools into in-person learning.

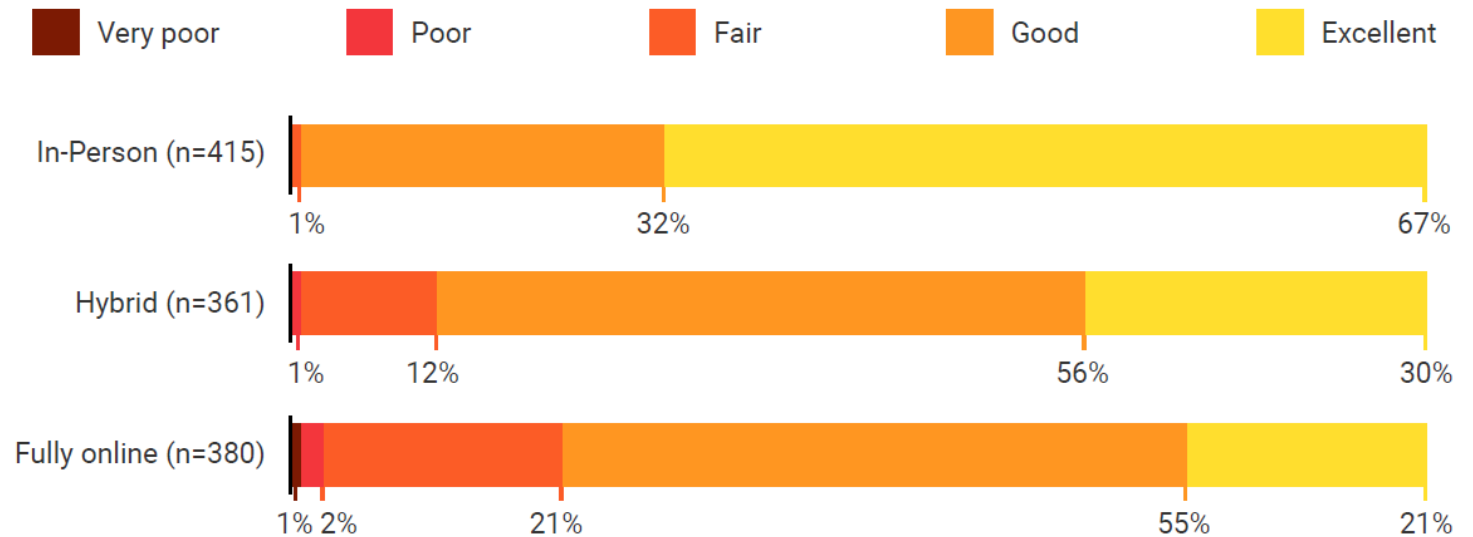
In what ways have your attitudes about your academic program changed since prior to the pandemic?



Continued Impediments to Digital Learning

- Doubts about quality – even from the top.
- Lack of incentives, training and support for faculty experimentation. Colleges can't expect buy-in without those things.
- Institutional worries about cannibalization of existing programs, competition on price, and loss of important revenues from campus-based services.

How would you rate the overall/average quality of each of the following types of courses being delivered this spring at your institution?



2023 Survey of College and University Presidents, *Inside Higher Ed*

Colleges Are Becoming More Digital: Student Support

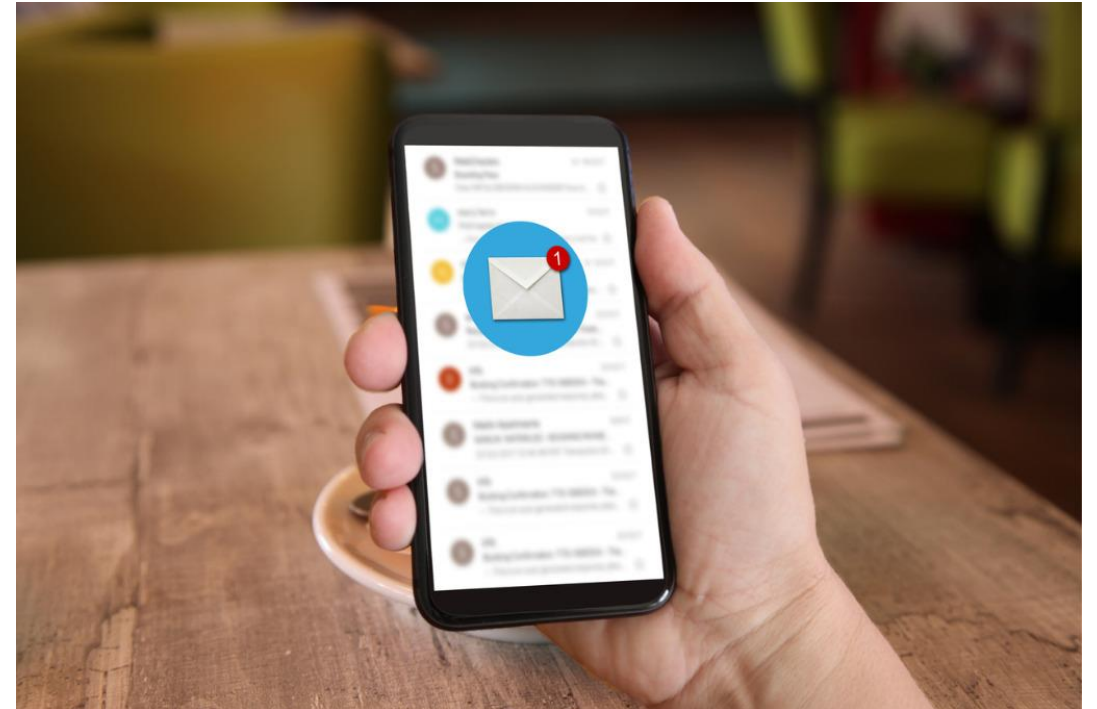
- Dispersion of students required institutions to make services available in different ways – from tutoring to mental health. Accelerated transformation we'd already seen around chatbots, nudging and other communications.
- Necessary as institutions increasingly serve adults, working learners, others who need (or just want) help and support “just in time” (which is as likely to be at 10 p.m. as at 10 a.m.).
- Digital learning provides institutions with much richer data on student behavior than they've had before, enabling more personalized and targeted interventions.



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Continued Impediments to More-Digital Student Support and Services

- Faculty and staff discomfort with technology, and institutional incentives to be in person
- Potential to overwhelm students with communications
- Concerns about privacy and security of student data
- Differences in technological access for different groups of students (“digital divide”)



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Colleges Are Becoming More Digital: Campus Operations

- Pandemic forced institutions to focus on business continuity more than many previously had.
- Use of digital technology and automation to improve efficiency (better use of facilities and energy, smoother flow of information and communication).
- Digitization of course materials, libraries, tenure and other processes.
- Automation beginning to creep into admissions offices ([our story this week](#)).

Which of the following best describes your institution when it comes to each of these plans?
My institution...

- ...had this plan in place before the pandemic began.
- ...created this plan after the pandemic began.
- ...does not have this plan in place but intends to create one in the future.
- ...does not have this plan and does not intend to create one in the future.

Academic continuity plan (n=228)



Business continuity plan (n=228)



Survey of College and University Chief Business Officers, *Inside Higher Ed*

Impediments to More-Digital Campus Operations

- Worries about jobs and being replaced by technology – hastened by recent anxiety over ChatGPT and other AI.
- A desire to maintain physical spaces, human interaction – see controversy over “all-digital” library at new consolidated Vermont State University (that actually wasn’t all digital).
- “This is the way we’ve always done it.”



Trendlines and Pressure Points

- Financial constraints will put increasing pressure on colleges to be more efficient and cost-effective – but “efficiency” is a dirty word for some academics, assumed to mean shortcuts on quality.
- Many employees in higher ed (as elsewhere) drown in busywork, driving down job satisfaction.
- College leaders may win support if they can show automation of lower-level tasks (through AI or other technologies) can actually give people more time to focus on what’s most important in their jobs – rather than eliminating jobs outright.
- At least in higher education, the future is hybrid, not remote: in learning, in work. Digital is essential, but often not sufficient.

Thanks

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