INSIDE HIGHER ED

Making Higher Ed More Efficient and Effective

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The Digital Campus for Student Success

According to Gartner's 2018 CIO Agenda Survey, 59 percent of higher education CIOs believe that digital transformation will lead to significant business model change, yet many institutions are lagging behind when it comes to implementing digital strategies for growth. As the higher education industry continues to face difficult challenges – changing student demographics, rising tuition costs, increasingly disruptive alternatives to tertiary education – institutions must actively pursue innovative ways to foster student success, and invest in technology as a core pillar of its growth strategy to remain competitive and thrive.

As the number of nontraditional students on campus rises, and incoming students become more technologically savvy, institutions must rethink the way that services are delivered. Students increasingly expect campus services that are as responsive and personalized as online retail stores and other commercial sector businesses. Beyond gaining cost and operational efficiencies, this quality digital experience is crucial to setting students up for success in their academic careers and as they enter the workforce.

With Laserfiche enterprise document management and process automation platform, institutions are driving digital transformation to achieve a modernized campus for student success. They are centralizing structured and unstructured data across siloed systems to form a more holistic view of each student, gathering historic information such as academic performance and financial background to enable administrators to understand how to better address student needs. They are leveraging electronic forms and workflow automation technology to reengineer and optimize processes to meet student expectations about service delivery, enabling students to submit requests and receive status updates without being limited to office hours or for commuting students, needing to be physically on campus. They are implementing robust analytics that convert data into business intelligence to identify at-risk students, design intervention programs tailored to the individual requirements of students, and inform decision-making regarding strategies to improve retention and completion.

As important as technology tools that facilitate the modernized campus is creating a culture and mindset of innovation, and colleges and universities need strong leaders and visionaries like you to drive this. Laserfiche is proud to be a trusted partner of higher ed CIOs and business leaders across the country, supporting initiatives to empower staff with the tools to collaborate across departments, access vital data to make decisions, and explore more efficient and effective ways to do their jobs. Seeing a campus coming together – from faculty, advisors and support staff that work directly with students, to the back-office and administrative functions that keep things running– to foster student success is a powerful thing, and we are excited to work with you to achieve digital transformation at your institution.

Sincerely,

Linda Ding

Director of Strategic Marketing, Laserfiche

Introduction

Colleges and universities open new opportunities for students, 18-year-olds and adults alike, while faculty research constantly changes the ideas that shape society's future. But none of that means that colleges are as effective or efficient as they could be. And in an era of constrained finances and evolving demographics, effectiveness and efficiency both matter more than ever.

In years past, many students arrived in higher education without the preparation or motivation needed to succeed, and colleges didn't think much of them dropping out in significant numbers. These days, colleges have come to realize that society needs more of these students to succeed. Many colleges also for decades relied on business models that – if not perfect – worked well enough. These days, public and private colleges are seeing traditional revenue sources dry up, making it vital to use dollars efficiently and to have processes that encourage sound management.

The articles in this booklet explore strategies of a range of colleges to promote effectiveness and efficiency. The articles touch on technology, enrollment, student success, finance and other topics. *Inside Higher Ed* will continue to track these issues, and we welcome your comments on this compilation and your suggestions for future coverage.

--The Editors
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News

A selection of articles by *Inside Higher Ed* reporters

It's All in the Data

BY MARK LIEBERMAN // NOVEMBER 8, 2017

University System of Maryland's campuses boast diverse student bodies in terms of race, income and college preparedness. Officials believe new data collection standards will improve retention and graduation rates.

Salisbury University

PHILADELPHIA -- The University System of Maryland determined four years ago that it needed a unified strategy for improving student success through standardized data collection and analysis at its 12 campuses -- including the flagship University of Maryland campus near Washington, smaller rural locations and historically black colleges. While the main campus maintains a highly selective enrollment process, some others with large proportions of minority and low-income students struggle with lower retention and graduation rates.

"We [needed] to understand … what does it mean when we put interventions into place?" said M.J. Bishop, director of the system's center for academic innovation, during a panel at last week's Educause conference here. "How do we know whether or not we're making a difference when we put these interventions into place?"

What followed was a process of introspection and realignment that the system's leaders believe has moved the campuses toward a level playing field: standardizing disparate definitions for student success data and identifying areas where students need more help than they're getting, particularly in the

classroom and before they arrive on campus for the first time.

Evolving Priorities

The system's Board of Regents convened an academic innovation task force years earlier to address what Bishop said during the Educause conference was "low-hanging fruit" -- issues of effectiveness and efficiency including pursuing energy certification for campus buildings, fixing procurement systems and printing fewer documents on paper.

The focus then shifted to the ongoing desire to close achievement gaps for students. The system wanted to get away from what Bishop called "rearview mirror" analysis -- wondering why, for example, a student left an institution after two years -- and toward taking proactive steps to improve learners' academic experiences and ensure retention.

The system's campuses have significant variation in retention and graduation rates, according to 2016 data, the most recent available on the system's website. For instance. four-year retention rates range from 38 percent at Coppin State University to 56 percent at Frostburg and 87 percent at the flagship College Park campus. Six-year graduation rates similarly vary: 17 percent at Coppin, 47 percent at Frostburg, and 85 percent at Maryland.

Each Maryland campus has its own corporate partner for data collection -- among them EAB (formerly Education Advisory Board), Civitas, Blackboard and several others -- but until recently the system had no easy way to compare the data or understand the information on a global level.

"Nothing seemed to be really looking at ways that we could capitalize on the collective power of the analytics across the system and begin building upon that kind of information," Bishop said.

One of the biggest obstacles, according to Bishop, was the lack of standard definitions for terms like "retention" and "success." Because each institution had its own metrics, identifying trends was virtually impossible.

> "Nothing seemed to be really looking at ways that we could capitalize on the collective power of the analytics across the system and begin building upon that kind of information."

Taking Concrete Steps

For help addressing those issues, the system turned to the Predictive Analytics Reporting framework, an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that offers support for institutions looking to organize data collection. The PAR framework identified traditional sticking points for creating common data definitions, which meant the system could skip ahead to fixing those definitions.

"Unless you started to have conversations about it and realized 'I thought everybody defined retention this way,' you wouldn't have unearthed this problem," Bishop said.

Five institutions in the system -- Bowie State University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Coppin State University, Frostburg State University and University of Maryland University College -- opted for full implementation of the PAR framework last year. Those institutions were the ones within the system -- including three historically black colleges and an online university -- that most needed funding support for data collection, according to Bishop. The remaining seven forged ahead with data collection and analysis initiatives, akin to the PAR framework, that were already in progress.

In January 2016 the entire system started making use of PAR's Student Success Matrix, an inventory form that asks institutions to provide information about their formalized intervention procedures for students at four stages of their academic careers: connection (between acceptance and arrival), entry, progress and completion.

That process revealed a few key trends. Most interventions at the Maryland campuses were aimed at students during the entry stage, with far fewer influencing them at connection and completion. The inventory revealed that zero interventions were in place at the faculty level. Redundancies frequently popped up, with similar orientation programs offered through numerous academic departments within an institution when only one was necessary.

"That was really surprising to us, since students spend most time with faculty members," Kimberly Whitehead, interim provost and vice president at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, said at Educause.

At Bowie State, for instance, the inventory highlighted that the institution's three tutoring centers don't communicate or coordinate with one another.

"We're now having conversations to bring this all together," Gayle Fink, Bowie State's assistant vice president for institutional effectiveness, said during the conference. "We wouldn't have done this if we didn't have a common framework."

Based on the inventory, Maryland's academic innovation team this spring recommended several approaches for improving student success initiatives systemwide:

- Adding more connection interventions.
- Developing a more systematic approach for data sharing going forward.
- Establishing a central repository for data collection.
- Creating and designing templates for future interventions.

More Work to Be Done

Those changes won't happen overnight, Bishop said in a phone interview. Administrative and faculty leaders need to be consulted. Institutions with full subscriptions to the PAR framework have more intensive studies to conduct. The system's Board of Regents will expect more quantitative data to back up the qualitative analysis that's already been gathered.

"It's about getting regents to be willing to take a 10-page report that describes the institutions' reflections on these things, what they're going to do about it -- a more meaningful and actionable exercise," Bishop said.

For other systems looking to undertake a similar process, Bishop recommends ensuring that plenty of administrators look at the data, and that a centralized office oversees disparate data efforts. Still, giving campuses wide latitude has paid off so far, she said.

"It was not about going in and saying, 'Everybody must use Civitas,' trying to do something from the top down -- that never would have worked," Bishop said. "I hope we helped to make things explicit that weren't necessarily readily seen prior to that in terms of the lack of collecting data." ■

https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/11/08/university-system-maryland-standardizes-data-collection-improve

Proliferating Partnerships

BY RICK SELTZER // JULY 14, 2017

Interest is high in public-private partnerships, which are allowing universities to pursue new types of financing and projects. But speakers warn that they aren't a magic bullet.

WASHINGTON -- Public-private partnership models are continuing to proliferate as cash-strapped colleges and universities seek to replace or update aging and outdated infrastructure amid tight finances.

That proliferation is on display in many of the large development projects institutions announce, like the ambitious billion-dollar-plus campus expansion plan the University of California, Merced, unveiled last year that uses a public-private partnership to build and operate new facilities. And it was evident at the Society for College and University Planning's annual conference in Washington this week, where several sessions focused on public-private partnerships, which are often called P3s.

Speakers pushed back against the idea that P3s are solely a way for colleges and universities to build when they have no debt capacity and little public financing available. Projects need to be viable on their own, and institution leaders should not expect P3s to be a source of facilities with no long-term financial impacts, speakers said.

Cal State Northridge

"They kind of always start with the premise or this notion of 'let's keep it off our balance sheet,'" said Jeff Turner, executive vice president at the program management firm Brailsford & Dunlavey. "But when you dig a little deeper, that's a little bit of a fallacy."

Turner spoke at a session Wednesday examining the different models and best practices for P3s. It was one of several sessions addressing the P3 model, who is using it, how it is being used and how it is

developing.

P3 models can be difficult to quantify because they take many different forms. Generally speaking in higher education, they have colleges and universities tapping private companies to finance, design, build operate and maintain facilities. The private companies don't necessarily provide all of those services in each instance -- the services provided vary by situation. The exact legal structures of the deals vary as well.

Colleges and universities will often pay for the up-front services through decades-long contracts under which the private partners operate and maintain the new facilities or draw revenue that they generate.

The model stands in contrast to a traditional set-up in which a college or university is responsible for financing a project up front or through bonds, hiring an architect and builder and operating a facility once it is finished.

P3s are probably best known in the United States as mechanisms for building dormitories. But the model has been migrating to other types of facilities in the last decade or so. Some say the migration has been driven by colleges and universities running into funding constraints from cash-strapped state governments and students who are balking at paying higher tuition and fees. But others see it as a way for institutions to pull off new types of development projects and tap private-sector financing without being saddled by operational headaches in the future.

One example of that is a Hyatt Place hotel planned for California State University, Northridge. The university has signed a letter of intent and is moving toward further agreements with a developer for the $52 million project, which is expected to be completed in 2019.

The hotel is planned to have about 150 rooms with a conference center and restaurant, said Colin Donahue, vice president of administration and finance at Cal State Northridge. Donahue spoke at the Wednesday session.

> "One of the things I was really concerned about is the risk to our general fund. We're not hotel operators. We're good at a lot of things, but we're not going to be nearly as efficient. We don't understand that market."

Cal State Northridge could have built the hotel on its own, Donahue said. But it had to look at long-term risks.

"One of the things I was really concerned about is the risk to our general fund," Donahue said. "We're not hotel operators. We're good at a lot of things, but we're not going to be nearly as efficient. We don't understand that market. And so it was better for us to get into risk sharing by understanding the market."

The hotel Cal State Northridge plans will have a 65-year ground lease. If all goes well, the developer will likely sell it in five years -- a standard move in the hotel industry, Donahue said. But that requires consideration as the university structures the deal. So does having a private operator on campus for 65 years.

Institutions need to approach the deals by planning for things that could go wrong, said Deborah Wylie, higher education studio leader at the architecture firm Harley Ellis Devereaux, who also spoke Wednesday.

"Keep in mind your relationship with your developer is 30, 60, 90 years," she said. "Anybody been married for that long?"

Donahue said Cal State Northridge has brought in real estate advisory firms and outside lawyers focused on real estate for P3s. Lawyers with experience in real estate say P3s are the types of deals they've done their whole lives, he said. But universities don't necessarily have experience in such deals.

The complexity of the deals means they aren't necessarily cheaper over all than if a college

or university built a facility using a traditional model. They aren't necessarily built faster, either. But developers can be better at controlling costs during and after the construction process, Turner said. Deals that include long-term operating agreements can mean private companies hire employees to staff buildings, a cheaper proposition than hiring state employees who receive more generous benefits.

Developers tend to invest more in buildings over their lifetimes than do universities, Donahue said. The private sector is in the habit of building cash reserves and updating buildings on a 10-year cycle. Universities can be tempted to defer maintenance as they address other budget priorities.

Some interesting developments at the system in California could ease P3 development.

The University of California has prequalified eight firms for student housing, Wylie said. UC campuses can tap into that list and avoid having to do separate requests for qualifications.

Cal State, meanwhile, is attempting to pool shared experiences from P3s across its campuses and make its processes more consistent, Donahue said.

"What we're trying to do now is pull together our shared experiences and develop some agreement templates and take some of the best practices that we've seen, look at things like the way you would analyze a project through the negotiations as the terms change," he said. "We want to be known in the development community as a system that has our act together and is attractive to work with."

Turner is seeing more and more bundling of multiple facilities into large P3 projects, he said. He warned against being overly ambitious with such projects. Donahue said he believes opportunity exists in smaller P3s.

> "What we're trying to do now is pull together our shared experiences and develop some agreement templates and take some of the best practices that we've seen."

The Wednesday presentation came a day after another notable session in which Nic de Salaberry, the director of planning and development at Ryerson University in Toronto, shared an analysis of P3s. He used a SCUP fellowship to study P3s and their application in higher education.

He found that P3s are creating options for long-term planning at universities and that the model is adaptable. But de Salaberry also found the model is better suited for some projects than it is for others.

"I'm an optimist -- I like to think that as more P3 projects are built for higher learning, there will be more lessons shared and more scrutiny of results," he said. "However, I'm also a realist, and because the money has to come from somewhere, there is only so much that a P3 solution can do to address long-term questions of how our campuses will be renewed."

P3s often mean less risk for colleges and universities seeking to build. But they also mean less control over the projects. As a result, de Salaberry believes the model is better suited for non-core university functions like student housing than it is for core functions like classrooms and laboratories, over which institutions likely want more control.

While P3s can open new sources of funding for colleges and universities, they can also influence the way institutions develop. One example de Salaberry gave was a design-build-finance P3 used to build a 365,000-square-foot aquatics center and gym for the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto. The project, which cost 205 million Canadian dollars -- or about $160 million -- was led by a public agency.

It took the specifications from the University of Toronto at

Scarborough and the city of Toronto, which were slated as its long-term users.

Projects that received funds for the Pan Am games were bumped ahead of other projects their home institutions might have viewed with a higher priority, de Salaberry said.

"You might just see that as funding priorities, and it is," he said. "But it's also a result of the P3 model that they could even have that bumping up take place."

Looking forward, de Salaberry wondered how P3 models and the facilities they create will stand the test of time. He wonders how the facilities will age -- whether buildings with multiyear private maintenance agreements will be maintained better than those that are owned and maintained by higher education institutions.

UC Merced will be an interesting test case for that.

"Half their campus is less than 10 years old and it was built in a conventional way," de Salaberry said. "The other half will have that long-term operating contract. It will be fascinating to go to Merced in 20 years and see whether there is a difference on one side of the campus versus the other."

He suspects colleges and universities in urban areas will be able to attract more interest from developers and stronger sets of bids than those in rural areas. And he pointed out that some information on P3 performance may be hard to come by -- institutions often don't always like to talk about projects that fail to live up to expectations.

"For me, the biggest takeaway is that P3s are not like some magic bullet," de Salaberry said. "They're not solving all the problems of universities, but they are showing us what universities think is most important to them." ■

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Checking on Vendors

BY LINDSAY MCKENZIE // FEBRUARY 8, 2018

Universities are turning to secret shoppers, not to spy on competitors, but to keep tabs on third-party vendors that run key functions like admissions.

In the competitive world of college admissions, first impressions are crucial. But if your institution outsources its communications with prospective students to a third-party vendor, how would you know if that vendor is pulling its weight? What if inquiries from qualified candidates went unanswered?

One solution, employed by an increasing number of both traditional and online-only institutions, is secret shopping. The method is particularly popular for reviewing admissions procedures, but secret shopping can be used to look at almost any aspect of how universities might interact with students, whether on campus or off and whether managed by the university internally or by third parties.

Secret shopping is a common tactic in the retail and hospitality businesses. Secret shoppers are employed to go into a business and act like a regular customer, perhaps with a particular scenario to test.

Unbeknownst to staff, that shopper carefully records details about their experience, which will be fed back to the company's management.

Maria Jump, assistant vice president of student services at Colorado State University Global Campus, an online-only institution in the CSU System, started using secret shopping last summer and now conducts around 20 "shops" per month. Her focus is on evaluating and improving the student experience, and secret shopping gives her information she "just couldn't get" from student surveys, she says.

"Secret shopping allows us to focus on one piece of the student experience and control what we're trying to test," said Jump. Rather than asking students to reflect on their general experience in retrospect, as usually happens with a survey, secret shopping allows Jump to see how the university is responding to specific situations.

While Jump frequently tests functions that the university runs internally, such as enrollment and advising, she is also increasingly using the service to test functions it outsources. Previously, the institution lacked the ability to "truly assess whether our vendors are upholding our service standards with our students," said Jump.

Jump identifies possible problems with vendors using responses from student surveys. She can then design shops to figure out if a student's experience was a one-off or part of a deeper issue. Jump said vendors the university works with, such as online tutoring service Smarthinking from Pearson Education, have been responsive to feedback from shops.

"We want to be transparent with our vendors about what we're doing," said Jump. "So we'll go to them afterwards and say, 'Hey, this is what we've done, and these are our findings,' and they're actually very appreciative of that information, because they don't always get that insight."

CSU Global works with a company called Campus Feedback to organize its secret shops. Campus Feedback is part of a larger organization called Goodwin Hospitality -- a national provider of secret shopping services for the hospitality industry. Jump said Campus Feedback was one of the only companies she found that offers secret shopping for higher education, although companies such as Render Experiences and Demand Engine offer similar services for campus visits and prospective student interactions, respectively.

Kurt Eddins, senior vice president of business development for Goodwin, said Campus Feedback has worked with around 100 institutions, including Brown University, Southern New Hampshire University and Hunter College in the City University of New York System. The company says it can help colleges look at their student experience "from start to finish."

> "We want to be transparent with our vendors about what we're doing, So we'll go to them afterwards and say, 'Hey, this is what we've done, and these are our findings."

"Every interaction with a student or prospective student, or family member or alumnus -- those are critical interactions in this competitive environment," said Eddins. Admissions is the most popular area for Campus Feedback in higher education, but shops can be organized for almost anything, he said.

Often institutions want feedback from their own students, whom Campus Feedback recruits to serve as secret shoppers. The institution never knows the identity of the secret shopper, and the shoppers are compensated for their time. Shops can include making phone calls or sending emails to test a service, or reviewing on-campus experiences such as dining halls, bookstores and athletic events.

Increasingly, institutions want to use secret shops not only to look at their own services, but for their vendors, said Eddins. "So many of these schools have so many vendor relationships, and they assume everything is going as planned, but that is not always the case," he said.

In recent years, colleges increasingly have outsourced key university functions. Though there are caps on how much universities can outsource from the academic side of a program, Republican policy makers in favor of deregulation could relax those rules. While outsourcing can make financial sense for institutions, and vendors can offer expertise colleges may not have, the rise of secret shopping of vendors highlights how challenging it can be for institutions to monitor whether their partners are operating as they would expect.

"I think if more institutional leaders knew they could secret shop their vendors, they would jump on

it," said Eddins. Secret shopping used to have something of a bad reputation, said Eddins. The perception that it's only used to look for problems, he said, has slowly become seen more as a constructive tool for assessment.

Alison Vujnovic, director of enrollment at Oral Roberts University, a private Christian university in Oklahoma, has been working with Campus Feedback for three years. Vujnovic said that she has been using shops to really "dig deep" and get an "inside look" at her institution's admission process from the perspective of a prospective student. In particular, Vujnovic regularly sends secret shoppers to open days on campus, where they evaluate everything from the car-parking instructions to food in the cafeteria and professor-student engagement in sample lectures.

Vujnovic said that she is up front about her methods with faculty and staff. She said that most people find the feedback helpful, even if it is negative. If someone gets a poor review, Vujnovic said, she will work with that person to ensure they get necessary training. Vujnovic said she has not used secret shopping to evaluate vendors, but that it is an intriguing idea. "We entrust so much in our partners," said Vujnovic.

Perhaps part of the poor reputation of secret shopping in higher education is the practice of secretly scoping out the competition. Rival universities often want to look at each other's practices to see how they compare, said Eddins, and this is a service Campus Feedback used to offer. But recently the company decided to discontinue the service. "It's something we grappled with," he said, "as we grew, we began to feel uncomfortable with it." One reason is that competitive secret shopping could present a conflict of interest for the company, Eddins said, for instance, if it was seeking to build a good relationship with one client and reported information on them to another client without their knowledge. "We want to be an unbiased third party and provide a service for these schools to evaluate themselves," he said.

Eddins said that requests to evaluate competitors are common because "it's sometimes easier to shine a light on the competition than look in the mirror." In the future, however, the company is thinking of ways it can provide valuable benchmarking data -- aggregated and anonymized -- to institutions so they can see how they compare to their peers. "The best clients for us are those that are really willing to engage and open up the hood to see what's going on," said Eddins. ■

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/08/universities-use-secret-shoppers-make-sure-outsourced-services-meet-standards

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'Disrupt This!'

BY DOUG LEDERMAN // AUGUST 23, 2017

Georgia Tech professor discusses her book questioning the premises and promises of disruptive innovation in higher ed and urges professors to play a more vital role in deciding when, where and how to use technology.

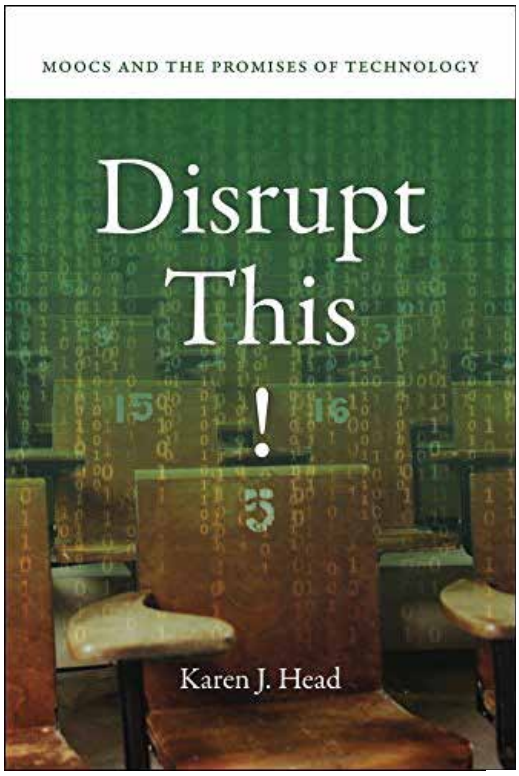
Don't let the subtitle of *Disrupt This!* -- "MOOCs and the Promises of Technology" -- fool you. Yes, massive open online courses have already come and (largely) gone as a phenomenon. So, you might ask, what can I possibly learn reading about a craze that has already been through the Gartner Hype Cycle?

Because other trends have already followed, and more are certainly to come, says the author, Karen Head, an associate professor (and incoming associate chair) at Geogia Institute of Technology's School of Literature, Media and Communication. Pick a buzzword -- personalized learning, predictive analytics, competecy-based education, adaptive learning -- and you can find companies and pundits promoting it as the next big thing to transform higher education. And most of them can be summed up by the central keyword in the book's title, the idea that colleges and universities are facing a giant wave of disruption that will, depending on one's point of view, potentially save or destroy higher education.

Karen Head

Head, who also directs Georgia Tech's Communication Center, isn't a Luddite, and *Disrupt This!* is not a screed against the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. It is, however, a warning about the "near-religious faith" that some institutions have in the promise of new technologies (fueled by Silicon Valley investment and the rhetoric of some high-profile futurists) and an appeal to professors to play a more central role in when and how their institutions bring technology into the learning process.

In the exchange below, Head answered questions via email about *Disrupt This!* and its lessons for faculty members and administrators alike.



Q: The book is nominally about what you learned from your experiences as an early experimenter in Georgia Tech's MOOC initiative, but it is less critique of the MOOCs themselves (which you note have largely receded as the hype wore off) than of the disruptive promises and threats of technology in educational delivery generally. Is that a fair reading, and if so, what do advocates for "disruption" in higher education get most wrong and what dangers flow from those flaws? And are there insights from the disruption theorists that you believe college leaders should heed?

A: Indeed. The book is a critique of the hype and punditry, and I present a thorough account of the types of rhetorical moves that some writers use to attempt to legitimate their arguments -- moves like the incorporation of religious language. Now that the mania surrounding MOOCs has subsided, many experts have quietly moved on to other supposed disruptive technologies or business trends. It's a bit of a fashion industry, and it's remarkable to me that universities are vulnerable to this.

I'm not a scholar of business change, so I won't attempt to answer the question about what insights we should heed from disruption theorists. I understand that disruptive innovation is just one of several theories, and that the evidence for it is being questioned among scholars who study business change. That's not to say that universities are not going to change in the coming decade; they probably will, possibly dramatically. The one thing we do know with some confidence, however, is that the biggest drivers of change are unlikely to be obvious in advance. They could just as well be political or social as technological. The senior administrators I know are very smart and thoughtful people. They don't need gurus.

Consequently, in my opinion, disruption theory isn't at the heart of what leaders should concern themselves with. My advice would be to identify the ways to convincingly market what universities can provide for the public -- to re-engage the notion that education is a public good. If leaders do not find easy-to-understand ways to present what their universities do as special and essential, then some people will drift toward alternatives that, on the surface, seem reasonable and acceptable.

Q: What in your view are the primary reasons why many instructors are wary of the role of technology in higher education generally and, if the reasons are different, in their own classrooms? What should institutions be doing (and not doing) to overcome those objections or concerns, since no technology or innovation in higher education is going to work if those on the front lines don't buy in?

A: One story I tell at the end of the book is how, post-MOOC, I wanted a break from being involved in new technology experiments for a little while. Instead, I found myself agreeing to serve on the faculty steering committee to determine the requirements for a new learning management system. Part of that process involved me piloting one of the potential platforms. When companies know you are part of the evaluation team, the technical support you receive is extremely "high touch." I received so much one-to-one assistance that my success using the platform was nearly guaranteed. The company was invested in my experience for obvious reasons, but I remember thinking that this was exactly the kind of experience I hoped for my students to have. I was particularly happy when I learned that the learning management system I had piloted had been chosen, and I immediately signed up to be in the first group to implement the platform -- again because

I knew I would have "premium" support. If every professor experienced this kind of onboarding for a new technology, then many more professors would be less resistant to the changes associated with new technology. Professors need the time to learn about and experiment with new technologies, and they need personal support to ensure their success.

Another way to work with faculty is to bring in experienced distance-learning professionals. I've had the opportunity to meet some of the top practitioners and scholars in the e-learning field. Many of them developed excellent training programs, some with extraordinary "sand boxes" for trying out a variety of technological tools. These facilities are often "one-button" spaces in which a faculty need only push in a USB drive (or link to the cloud), and then press a single button to drive the entire system. Instructional designers and technologists are also key players in helping faculty acclimate to and embrace technology by diminishing the learning curve and time to use.

Q: You are dismissive at various points of the possibility that using technology to deliver instruction at scale can give professors the knowledge classroom instructors gain about their students' strengths and weaknesses, and help them tailor teaching to their needs. But you also acknowledge that you're accustomed to 30-person creative writing courses, not the 150- (or 300- or 500-) student lectures standard at many universities in many disciplines. Do you not see promise in the much-ballyhooed idea that technology can increase personalization, as defined by arming instructors with much more information about the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and adapting content, tutoring and assessment based on those analyses?

> "Now that the mania surrounding MOOCs has subsided, many experts have quietly moved on to other supposed disruptive technologies or business trends. It's a bit of a fashion industry, and it's remarkable to me that universities are vulnerable to this."

A: In many ways, this question is dependent upon what elements you include in "instruction." If you mean the individualized delivery of general content for mastery, then I think that has proven scalable, as are many self-paced online learning aids for courses like calculus. However, the higher-touch instructional work necessary for teaching writing (or other "soft skills"), doesn't easily scale, and the burden of proof lies with people claiming that it can.

My writing courses are capped between 16 (for creative writing) and 25 (for composition or technical writing) students. My literature courses, which are much less writing intensive, are capped at 35. Those numbers, as you note, are much lower than in some fields, but for a student to demonstrate mastery involves more personalized attention from an instructor. Even in some STEM courses, like first-year problem-based learning or studio courses, which you find in design-intensive fields like biomedical engineering and architecture, also require personalized interactions. Ultimately, the only pale imitation of personalization that's feasible in large classes is the kind that can be delegated to self-paced online learning aids, which address the lowest levels of Bloom's taxonomy -- the memorization of facts and basic principles, without the application, transfer to novel situations, integration or creativity, which are the very things that employers say they want. In fact, "adaptive" technologies essentially reimplement more flexibly B. F. Skinner's ideas from the 1960s about programmed learning. These are personalized learning only in name. For creative, integrative learning, there are no shortcuts: it's either quality or efficiency, and there's no

magic bullet.

My foremost concern with all issues of scalability is whether the economic drivers will create exigencies that lead to more "better than nothing" arguments about education in general. Could we find ourselves in a future where there are only two types of education: those who can afford an elite education get a high-touch education, and everyone else gets "something that is better than nothing" at scale? I hope not.

Essentially the problem isn't technology, per se. Problems arise in how technology is employed. Technology does offer many affordances that instructors can use to increase the amount of high-touch instruction they provide. Hybrid/flipped classrooms have demonstrated this, and I am an advocate of using technology as one pedagogical tool among many. Data can also alert instructors to certain trends, but some students often present as struggling much sooner, if the professor is interacting with them. Algorithms can't see a student who clearly hasn't slept in days, isn't eating well, is impatiently pacing outside your office or, in the worst cases, begins to cry. In fact, I have often marveled at the ability of some students to continue to complete assignments with success while enduring a crisis, but this doesn't mean they are being as successful as they might be if the problem is identified sooner.

Q: Some might read *Disrupt This!* as a caution (if not a call to arms) against the use of technology in the classroom. Instead, you seem to accept that technology-infused teaching is going to be part of the fabric of higher education going forward, and to believe that professors should be more engaged, not less, in understanding the technology, gauging its effectiveness and playing an active role in deciding when, how and which kinds of technologies are used. What role should professors be playing on their own campuses -- and in the national dialogue, to the extent they choose to be involved in that -- around instructional technology?

"Algorithms can't see a student who clearly hasn't slept in days, isn't eating well, is impatiently pacing outside your office or, in the worst cases, begins to cry."

A: I'm a big believer in getting your hands dirty. You need to earn a place in the conversation, and that means being part of the process. Pedagogical technology has been a fixture for decades, with learning management systems like Canvas and Blackboard ever present. Faculty cannot reasonably say that technology plays no role in their teaching, and they should not leave decisions about pedagogical technologies to others. As I say in the book,

When offers like [being part of the selection process for a new learning management system] are made to us faculty members to participate in the creation of our work environment, we should rise to the challenge. Our technology environment should not be something to complain about like the weather; we should play a role in changing it. If, as future users, we refuse to engage with administrators who may not understand the full slate of requirements in practical terms, then decisions are likely to be guided by the bells and whistles that are promoted by the manufacturer as the most innovative features available -- even if those features won't work or aren't really needed.

Therefore, I think administrators have to be sure evaluation committees are populated with a variety of people -- not just the true believers who clearly love technology and are comfortable using it. Another essential constituency is student representation -- again, a group with a wide range of capabilities. Skeptics, nonusers, and end users can provide much needed insight about how a new technology might (or might not) be-

come an integrated and productive tool. The same diversity for assessment committees is also crucial. Administrators also have to demonstrate that they are listening closely to the needs expressed by faculty and students -- resisting any "sexy" sales pitches by potential providers.

It is probably safe to say that any single technology will not be embraced by 100 percent of those who are expected to use it, but whatever technology is chosen should answer to as many needs articulated by the end users as possible.

Q: You make it sound like you decided to participate in the MOOC experiment at Georgia Tech over your better judgment, and your experiences were decidedly mixed. Are you glad you did? Are there ways in which it made you better at your job or a more informed citizen of your institution and higher education? What do you say to other faculty members who might find themselves in a similar position -- and to the administrators who want them involved?

A: Yes, I was hesitant to take part in the MOOC project, but that had nothing to do with the technology aspects. I'm actually a technology geek -- very often a first adopter. In this case, as a junior professor without tenure, I was concerned that an experiment focused on teaching, even one assessing a potentially cutting-edge technology, could be detrimental to my career. My institution says it takes pride in promoting innovation and risk taking, but it is not common here or elsewhere for faculty to succeed if they concentrate too much on teaching and not enough on research.

My case was unusual, because I could build a solid bridge between the two, but if a junior faculty member cannot clearly connect a teaching experiment to the research their colleagues expect from them, and get assurances that such connections will be valued, that is a risk not worth taking.

I took that risk, but I would only recommend this path to others if administrators' assurances were backed by changes in policy, and they must remove the barriers that -- despite what they may sincerely believe -- actually de-incentivize innovation. ■

https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/08/23/author-disrupt-discusses-role-technology-higher-education

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The Merger Vortex

BY RICK SELTZER // AUGUST 1, 2017

Mergers are hard, but they're likely to be a topic of interest going forward, even if they don't all make it off the drawing board, leaders with experience tell audience at NACUBO meeting.

MINNEAPOLIS -- Mounting fiscal pressures on higher education institutions would seem to have created a ripe environment for mergers between colleges and universities, yet many administrators remain unconvinced such deals will actually happen.

Listen to those who have completed or considered mergers, and it's not hard to see why leaders are skeptical. The process is fraught with difficulty.

Still, the idea that more mergers are coming has persisted. The topic was explored in depth Monday at the National Association of College and University Business Officers annual meeting. A panel offered different perspectives from leaders who have guided their institutions through completed mergers within a university system, one whose private institution was absorbed by a much larger public university, and one whose public university decided not to go forward with acquiring a private college.

Their general consensus was that mergers are extremely difficult, but they are likely to take place in increasing numbers in the future. That means high risks and high potential rewards.

Credit: istockphoto

"Trustees don't know how to manage this; university administrators don't know how to manage this," said Allen Morrison, chief executive officer and director general of the Thunderbird School of Global Management, which in 2014 agreed to become a part of Arizona State University after a controversial deal that would have had it acquired by the for-profit Laureate Education chain fell through.

"And yet it is happening and it needs to happen," continued Morrison, who joined Thunderbird in late 2014 when the deal with Arizona State was finalized. "If it is managed properly, it can be incredibly positive for all the parties involved. But if it just is left to fumble along, we're going to have some real serious issues."

The NACUBO panel spoke days after *Inside Higher Ed* released its annual Survey of College and University Business Officers, finding some interest in mergers but skepticism that they will actually hap-

pen. One in eight chief business officers said senior administrators at their institutions had serious internal discussions about merging with another college or university in the last year. But about nine in 10 said mergers were not likely.

Monday's panel discussion started with an overview of trends that seem to point to more mergers in the future than have happened in the past, however. Pressure from falling enrollments is building on small institutions with fewer than 1,000 students, said Kasia Lundy, managing director of Parthenon-EY, a consulting firm within Ernst & Young. The number of U.S. higher education transactions in the mergers and acquisitions category has gone from 12 in the 2000s to 22 between 2010 and 2017, she said.

"We are now on track, I think, to have three times as many mergers in this decade as we had in the previous decade," she said.

Reasons for institutions to merge are many. They can save money by becoming larger organizations. Large institutions might want to acquire smaller ones if it adds to the depth or breadth of their operations. Merging into larger institutions can also give small colleges the protection of a better-known brand name or additional institutional resources with which to improve their performance.

Panelists warned that the merger process is extremely long. Leaders can expect it to take between one and three years. And if they perform proper due diligence, they might find that, despite the time and energy invested in a deal, the best move is to walk away.

Salem State University made the decision to walk away from a merger it had been exploring with Montserrat College of Art in 2015. Leaders said at the time that the numbers "just didn't work."

Karen House, the vice president for finance and business at Salem State, did not elaborate Monday on the public university's reasons for not acquiring the private art college. She said the deal was attractive because the art college drew more students from out of state than did Salem State and because of its quality programs. Leaders also wanted the art college to succeed for the sake of their shared region in Massachusetts.

Salem State leaders looked at the corporate world and at other cases in higher education to try to find a template for evaluating and carrying out a merger, House said. They found little that was applicable because of the lack of historic M&A action in higher education and because the for-profit world is very different. As a result, university leaders in many ways created their own process and learned lessons from it.

For example, they did not identify a set of criteria they would use to make their decision early in the evaluation process, House said. Laying out the factors that would lead them to say yes or no to a deal at an early date would have made the entire evaluation more efficient, she said.

The process included a steering committee with top leaders from both institutions, as well as two trustees from each side. The committee met regularly to exchange information. It eventually was led by a part-time project manager, and the sides evaluated seven years' worth of financial statements.

Trustees played a critical role in the final decision. Administrators had invested enough time and energy in the prospective deal that they had a difficult time evaluating it. Trustees supported the idea but also challenged administrators to prove it was the right move.

"They were aware there was this really immediate desire to get to yes," House said. "At one point they said, and it was a caution, 'Be careful that the vortex of the deal doesn't draw you in. You really need to make the right decision for the right reasons.'"

The University System of Georgia, on the other hand, has completed a dizzying number of mergers between its institutions. In 2010 it had 35 institutions, including roughly 10 in parts of the state where the population of 15- to 24-year-olds was projected to decline. So the system embarked on a series of mergers that had it combining administrations -- but not closing campuses. It has 28 institutions today and expects to be down to 26 in January, said Chancellor Steve Wrigley.

The system has proceeded with the clear goal of serving students better, Wrigley said. That meant

asking how to meet students' needs and raise attainment levels -- questions that conflict with the impulse some state systems feel to protect local interests.

> Be careful that the vortex of the deal doesn't draw you in. You really need to make the right decision for the right reasons.

"Those are different questions than how do we protect our institutions," Wrigley said. "And you get very different answers about policies and budget decisions and allocations and directions when you ask those kinds of questions."

It wasn't easy, of course. When the university system pursued its first set of four mergers, it laid out an aggressive timeline of consolidating institutions within 18 months so that it could meet accreditor timelines and federal financial aid deadlines.

Challenges included identity issues on campuses and consolidating student populations with different levels of college readiness, said Shelley Nickel, the university system's executive vice chancellor for strategy and fiscal affairs. Blending institutional missions and culture was also difficult.

"This does not happen in 18 months, believe me," Nickel said. "That's something that goes on for years and years."

Officials estimate the university system has saved $24 million through its consolidations. They say the money has been redirected to student success initiatives, like advising, in order to try to raise retention and graduation rates.

Ultimately, Nickel said, every consolidation is different. Leaders learn something new with each set of institutions they consolidate. They have learned to have certain details in place when announcing a consolidation -- including the new institution's name and its president. Another lesson is that transparency through the process is key.

"These are people's lives that you're dealing with," Nickel said. "They want to know where they're going to end up on the org chart, and you need to think about that in the decisions that you make."

Morrison, of Thunderbird, recommended engaging a broad group of stakeholders during the merger process. Alumni are an important part of an institution. So are donors. It's a leadership challenge, he said.

"The consequence of these things will be highly impactful," he said. "It impacts things like the endowment -- what do you do about the endowment -- and you have people who have given the institution often millions and millions of dollars that have buildings named after them. How do you engage them in this discussion?" ■

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/08/01/higher-ed-mergers-are-difficult-likely-grow-popularity-speakers-say

Can Dartmouth Grow and Stay Small?

BY RICK SELTZER // AUGUST 25, 2017

College considers increasing undergraduate levels by 10 percent to 25 percent -- but still identifying as a small college. Despite a $112 million 2016 operating deficit, administrators say the move wouldn't be about bringing in more money.

Dartmouth College, which fiercely defends its status as the smallest member of the Ivy League, has nonetheless started weighing the question of whether it should grow larger.

A new task force will examine the advantages and drawbacks of growing Dartmouth's 4,310-student undergraduate body by between 10 percent and 25 percent, the college said earlier this month. The evaluation comes after President Phil Hanlon last fall named increasing enrollment as a strategic issue to be evaluated, and as the college expects a larger-than-normal cohort of first-year students arriving next month after substantially more accepted offers of admission than do so in a typical year.

The idea of significantly growing the student body could invite debate and soul-searching at Dartmouth, which clings to its identity as a historic small college with a low student-to-faculty ratio of 7.4 to one. But it comes after the college's faculty has grown in size faster than its student body. It also comes against the backdrop of an operating budget posting a deficit of more than $100 million last year and questions over whether Dartmouth's campus in tiny Hanover, N.H., could accommodate an influx of additional students.

Dartmouth College

Administrators say the primary impetus behind exploring growth is whether Dartmouth can serve more students without eroding its signature undergraduate experience, thereby increasing its impact. They are also quick to point out that no decision has been made on whether the college actually will grow.

"This isn't about bringing in more revenue," said Rick Mills, Dartmouth executive vice president. "It really is a question of, 'Can we do more mission?' "

Yet college leaders acknowledge the idea of growth is also tied to the reality of dollars and cents. Any growth plan formed by the new task force will have to break even

financially, at the very least. In other words, growth can't run up the deficit.

Dartmouth has already been dealing with deficits in recent years. It posted an operating loss of more than $112 million in 2016, a year after an operating loss of $15.2 million. Expenses rose 3 percent to $918.1 million even as revenue slipped 2 percent to $859.7 million.

The 2016 operating losses were driven by some unique circumstances. About half, $53.5 million, came as Dartmouth restructured its school of medicine, which has been losing money in recent years. The college also had to account for noncash items like unfunded depreciation on its balance sheet and post-retiree health obligations, Mills said.

A case can also be made that Dartmouth can afford a few years of operating deficits. The university's endowment is valued at $4.5 billion. Nonetheless, some bloggers and critics have targeted Dartmouth's administration for lacking fiscal discipline.

Mills went on to make the case that enrolling additional undergraduates is separate from the university's past budget deficits -- that boosting enrollment is unlikely to do more than pay for itself. Currently, the average cost of educating a student at Dartmouth is higher than what the college nets from an average student in tuition, he said. The endowment makes up the difference.

Further, Dartmouth admits citizens, eligible noncitizens and undocumented students in the U.S. on a need-blind basis, meaning it does not consider their financial situation when it offers students admission. It guarantees free tuition for students from families who have total incomes of $100,000 or less and own normal levels of assets. The college also says it guarantees students will receive all of the financial assistance necessary to meet their fully assessed need.

Of course, colleges can always construct workarounds designed to find more money from admitted students if they want to. Dartmouth is need aware for international students, meaning it takes financial need into consideration as one of many factors when deciding whether to make an admissions offer. It could conceivably raise net tuition revenue by admitting more international applicants. It could also evaluate whether students who are currently just below its admission cutoff are more likely to be full-pay students who use fewer services on campus.

That will not be the case, Mills said.

"We sort of assumed the ratio of students on aid for the cohorts that get admitted, that ratio will be the same as it is today," he said.

The college might still find a break-even point with more students if it is able to use its facilities and serve those students more efficiently.

"How much, in growing, can you leverage your existing fixed expenses without adding to the cost base?" Mills asked. "Maybe there's a way to grow with marginal costs that get added with the students that aren't as large, because you don't need a new gym, a bigger gym. You can use the same gym at the same cost."

However, more students will likely mean more capital costs. Dartmouth would need additional residence hall beds, Mills said.

The college is already facing some pressures on its dormitory space. Dormitories that house first-year students are worn, said Andrew Samwick, a professor of economics who will be the chair this academic year of the Committee on Priorities, which forms and promotes faculty budget priorities. This year's higher-than-expected admissions yield already means some undergraduates will be living in campus housing that was previously dedicated to graduate students, he said.

As of a May 1 commitment deadline, 61 percent of the students admitted for the Class of 2021 accepted offers, Dartmouth announced earlier this year. The college's yield rate is typically closer to 50 percent. This fall's enrolling class was projected to be 1,279. At the same time in 2016, 1,156 students had accepted admission for the Class of 2020.

Some melt has taken place since the May announcement, but the college still has a larger-than-normal class. The college's current enrollment for the new class is 1,222, with administrators attributing the difference from earlier projections

largely to students taking gap years. Last year, 1,121 enrolled.

Consequently, Dartmouth will get a small-scale preview of what it would be like to grow the student body.

"The first thing to investigate is what having about 100 extra students in the first-year class is going to do to our educational mission to each student," Samwick said.

Other faculty members voiced similar concerns. Dartmouth's campus is already too small for its student body, said Thomas Cormen, a professor of computer science and former chair of the Committee on Instruction, which reviews matters related to educational policy.

Cormen likened Dartmouth's vaunted D-Plan, a year-round quarter system devised when the college started admitting women in the 1970s, to a computer's cache. The D-Plan -- formed amid discussion about how Dartmouth could admit women without displacing men -- rotates students off campus, enabling the college to enroll more students without adding more physical space or altering the size of the student body during any one quarter.

An upside to enrolling more undergraduates would be if the college then hired more faculty, adding to departments and intellectual activity, Cormen said. He would not support adding undergraduates without adding faculty positions.

"That would be terrible," Cormen said. "We'd be seeing class sizes increasing. In our department, we are capping just about every course. We never used to cap courses. We don't always hit the cap, but we have to plan for it, which is terrible."

Computer science may be feeling the crunch of high student demand. But the number of faculty members at Dartmouth has grown faster than undergraduate enrollment over the years, said Mills, the college's executive vice president.

> "Maybe there's a way to grow with marginal costs that get added with the students that aren't as large, because you don't need a new gym, a bigger gym. You can use the same gym at the same cost."

Dartmouth's School of Arts and Sciences, its largest, had 606 faculty members in 2016, according to the college's Office of Institutional Research. That's up by more than 15 percent from 526 in 2004.

Meanwhile, undergraduate headcount enrollment in the college was 4,310 in 2016, up only 5.7 percent from 4,079 in 2004.

Student housing issues aside, it might be possible to utilize classroom space during more hours of the day. It's an issue to look at, one of many the task force on undergraduate expansion is charged with, Mills said.

The task force members include a college trustee and faculty members. Its two chairs, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Elizabeth Smith and Dean of the College Rebecca Biron, were not available for interviews this week.

But Biron recently told the Associated Press that the task force will attempt to demonstrate how an increase in enrollment would be revenue neutral, potentially saving the college money in some areas and improving the quality of its undergraduate education.

"The overall question is what are the pros and cons of potential enrollment growth, and specifically, the task force has been asked to develop a hypothetical implementation plan with the idea that we would be studying the implications and impact on the educational experience here if we pursued growth in the student body," said Biron, who is a professor of Spanish and comparative literature. As dean of the college, she is Dartmouth's senior officer responsible for undergraduate academic life.

Faculty members are also concerned the newly formed committee is expressly charged with examining growing undergraduate enrollment. Reducing undergraduate enrollment could also be looked at, said Samwick, who is chairing the Committee on Priorities. He ex-

pects the idea to come up in discussions in the future.

"The challenge for Dartmouth is to be the best of both worlds: a research university that competes with much larger peers but devotes the bulk of the expertise of the faculty to the teaching of undergraduate students," Samwick said. "I think that's a unique value proposition that we offer to students."

The task force is slated to draw up an initial report for Mills and other Dartmouth administrators by the end of October. A final report is due in the middle of March.

Dartmouth says the effort comes as several of the college's departments seek more students from upcoming classes. Some have also asked for more students from different backgrounds, students with different interests and students from other countries.

The college has also stressed that other Ivy League institutions have been growing faster than it has.

Dartmouth's ability to convince students, faculty and alumni that it will remain a small college will likely be key to the success or failure of any plan to enroll more undergraduates. Dartmouth's identity is closely tied to the idea of smallness. A favorite story from its history is that of Dartmouth College v. Woodward, an 1819 Supreme Court case considered key to U.S. contract and corporate law.

Daniel Webster, an alumnus who would later go on to become a U.S. senator, represented Dartmouth. He made an emotional plea for Dartmouth, saying it was a small college, "and yet there are those who love it."

The college's size might not have been the immediate issue that the court decided -- that issue was whether the state of New Hampshire could turn Dartmouth into a public university. But the idea of Dartmouth as a small college has endured.

It was brought up by alumni discussing the task force on expansion in the Dartmouth College Class of 1983 Facebook group. One commenter said, "Daniel Webster is rolling over in his grave." Another said that "doubling in size will change the whole experience and culture that is Dartmouth." (The maximum growth that the committee is considering, however, is 25 percent.)

Some credited Dartmouth for forming a task force and having an open discussion before making a decision, though. One commenter said that "a college that doesn't at least consider ... multiple paths to sustainability and relevancy lives in the past." ■

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/08/25/dartmouth-college-weighs-substantially-growing-undergraduate-population

Physical Spaces, Transforming Before Our Eyes

BY MARK LIEBERMAN // JANUARY 17, 2018

Institutions are pouring money into modern spaces designed to promote active learning and technology engagement. Balancing costs and benefits remains a challenge.

In 2015, Texas Woman's University's department of teacher education concluded that it needed to better prepare aspiring educators for the technological capabilities of the classrooms they're hoping to lead once they graduate.

That initiative's co-founders, Chad Smith, coordinator of education for the deaf, and Ludovic Sourdot, associate professor in curriculum and instruction, identified a "very nice space" on campus that would be ideal, but university leaders decided against converting that room, which serves 1,000 students. They eventually settled on a former dormitory constructed in 1936.

A year later, the Future Classroom Lab was born, complete with touch-screen monitors, coding and robotics opportunities, and an arrangement of strategically placed education zones that address different aspects of the teaching experience. The space has garnered praise from nearby primary and secondary schools -- but it also required elusive buy-in from administrators and a new approach to thinking about the classroom experience.

The Future Classroom Lab at Texas Woman's University

"We do not expect any future teachers to walk into a learning environment that looks exactly like the Future Classroom Lab at TWU," Smith said. "We do expect them to walk into a learning space in their schools and see some of the applications [of technology] that they see in the Future Classroom Lab."

Discussions of technology in the classroom often involve nontangible properties: websites, software programs, the cloud. But digital learning has tangible implications as well -- including the reshaping of physical spaces at campuses across the country.

Institutions looking to modernize the learning experience for students now ask themselves to what extent they should invest in technology-centered rooms and labs. Under-

lying questions in those discussions include what needs the spaces will fill, where those spaces belong, how many digital tools they should include and how they will complement and enhance students' grasp of their chosen field.

Some new spaces offer students opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom. Others serve as classroom space for part or all of a semester-long course. Institutions spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on such spaces in the hopes that they'll serve as the center of a growing movement toward a modern definition of teaching and learning.

"I think there's a growing awareness that active learning is an incredibly powerful way to impact student success on campuses," said David Taeyaerts, associate vice chancellor of learning environments and campus architect at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and a volunteer member of the facilities planning academy of the Society for College and University Planning. "The vast majority of physical spaces that campuses have cannot easily support active learning. They need to be changed."

Location, Location, Location

Digital learning goals can revive dormant or underutilized campus spaces. At Bentley University in Massachusetts, a basement computer lab with 40 computers, poor lighting and no windows has become the Computer Information Systems Sandbox.

"When they asked me to take over the place, I really didn't want to," said Mark Frydenberg, senior lecturer of computer information systems, who led creation of the Sandbox. "It wasn't the most exciting place on campus to be."

The renovated space now includes fewer computers, more open space for laptops and personal devices, collaborative workstations with large monitors, large-screen wall displays, and room for temporary additions like speakers.

Students working on video production in the Martin Media Center at the University of Notre Dame.

The University of Notre Dame took a different path to a new academic space, starting first with an ambitious studio for its athletics program that gradually morphed to encompass the institution's other goals. According to Daniel Skendzel, executive director of Notre Dame Studios, the Martin Media Center was conceived as the host of media production facilities for broadcasting and live-streaming athletic events.

"All along, as we were building that out, we had this eye that that wasn't the ultimate goal to build it for athletics," Skendzel said. "We used the new building as proof of concept for a larger vision."

Now the facility includes a 1,500-square-foot academic innovation space that includes virtual reality demonstrations, video equipment and a light board -- the latter two allow faculty members to record lectures for flipped classrooms.

Housing these services alongside the athletics program is more efficient and allows for more cross-department learning and sharing, Skendzel said.

"We like to think of it as a shared services model, particularly with infrastructure that is capital intensive," Skendzel said. "It doesn't make sense to replicate it across campus. We want to build it once in the center of campus and then allow the users to draw off it."

Sometimes luck wins. When the biology department at Northern Virginia Community College was looking to create a $150,000 digital anatomy and physiology lab space complete with virtual cadaver, an open classroom space attached to two existing wet labs proved the perfect spot.

"We could provide a passageway from both labs into the one digital lab, so that students and instructors can move back and forth between those settings," said Cindy Miller, associate professor of biology.

Getting Buy-In from the Higher-Ups

Rooms like these require support and funds from institutional leadership -- neither of which comes without perseverance and strategy.

Smith and Sourdot from Texas Woman's University faced hurdles beyond location in the process of convincing decision makers to fund their project. Both were convinced that the room, which initially cost $101,000, should be designed to allow for frequent evolution. "We did not anticipate that the lab would look like it does right now two or three years from now," Smith said.

But to many administrators, ambiguity and uncertainty breed anxiety. Smith said they had to press hard on the idea that purchasing the technology was only the first step in a process of helping students use new tools more effectively. Positive reviews from outside the institution persuaded the institution that Smith and Sourdot were headed in the right direction.

Administrators aren't the only parties who ought to be consulted before creating new physical spaces, according to Frydenberg, from Bentley University. To discover how students were using the space he wanted to transform, he talked to tutors who worked there. Next, he engaged the academic technology center to find out whether upgrading a space that hadn't been touched in 10 years would be possible. Staffers suggested brighter colors and more appealing furniture, among other tweaks.

A conversation with the admissions department helped him set a concrete goal: to make the room palatable enough for inclusion on the campus tour for prospective students.

"I heard, 'Every school has a computer lab. We don't show it,'" Frydenberg said. "That resonated with me that we needed to do something different."

Taeyaerts, of the University of Illinois at Chicago, believes the key to getting stakeholders on board is to involve them from the beginning of the process. By the time the project is ready for approval from an administrator, it should have a diverse range of university champions.

"Getting the leaders, the decision makers out to the physical spaces to look at it firsthand and then paint the vision created by these stakeholders of what it could become is really compelling," Taeyaerts said. "There's an idea in the back of their head -- bring forth data and evidence, bring in the real world of looking at the space. That's what you really need to seal the deal."

Students use the Computer Information Systems Sandbox at Bentley University to extend classroom instruction.

What Belongs Inside

The Bentley lab serves as a "technology/social learning space," according to Frydenberg. Large-screen displays line the walls, and digital devices including tablets, "raspberry pi" devices and a virtual reality headset lie in wait for students to use. Frydenberg initially expected to include computers, but he soon found that students prefer to bring their own.

In addition to studying there, students have created tutorial videos that now appear on the institution's website and viewed workshops and lectures from technology industry guests who discuss self-driving cars and the dark web, among other pressing issues.

At Texas Woman's University, Smith and Sourdot believe students need to be prepared for entering primary and secondary classrooms in which every student has and wants to use a personal device. In each of six "zones," students follow prescribed behavioral objectives including exchange (conducting meetings and collaborating with other students), creativity, and investigation (using and developing technology tools).

Instructors can supervise and evaluate students from four web-based cameras.

Questions persist about whether available technology tools will enhance or detract from the learning experience. One possible solution

at a larger institution is Indiana University's Mosaic Initiative, which encompasses a plan for a wide range of low- and high-tech campus spaces as well as a fellowship program for instructors interested in active learning.

"We're so big at IU and have so many classrooms that we didn't think it was practical or even desirable for us to try to have one classroom design," said Stacy Morrone, associate vice president of learning technologies and founder of the Mosaic Initiative.

Projects have ranged from large scale -- converting a former swimming pool into a massive active learning classroom with large video screens -- to rooms simply outfitted with plentiful whiteboard space. The system is also conducting a classroom needs analysis study at Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis this academic year, with a goal of improving and expanding the quantity and quality of active learning spaces.

Tips for Success

Leaders behind the creation of these rooms advocate for a few simple components of a successful attempt.

■ Faculty development. Taeyaerts said faculty members need to know how to use the technology in the rooms and how to integrate it into their curricula. Otherwise, he said, a fancy new space "falls a little bit flat." That can mean hiring an instructional designer or instructional technologist to find and teach new ways to use wireless technology, holding training sessions on new tools, or simply sharing best practices between faculty members.

■ Flexible space. Filling every inch of the room with gadgets pushes the room too far in the direction of innovation at the expense of other valuable opportunities for collaboration. Some Mosaic rooms have little more than seating and a whiteboard but prove just as effective as higher-tech facilities, Morrone said. Faculty members who wouldn't be comfortable engaging with numerous technology tools simultaneously are more likely to take a smaller step in one of the lower-level spaces, broadening the pool of faculty members who get involved, according to Morrone. Overloading a space with too many digital tools can also cut into the learning experience and the university's budget, Taeyaerts said.

■ Balancing up-front cost and long-term investment opportunities. Technology costs money -- often more than provosts are willing to shell out, according to Taeyaerts. Starting small and building from there can be more effective, especially if new spaces are filling clearly existing needs. "It is [all about] balance," Taeyaerts said.

■ Clearly defined ownership. If the space is owned at the college or school level, those entities spend money to upgrade classroom technology and lobby for institutional funds, according to Michael Hites, chief information officer at Southern Methodist University and a member of SCUP. If the institution owns the space, it uses its own funds to maintain the space. The primary owner has the first right to schedule sessions in the space, Hites said. When the institution owns the space, classroom utilization and lining up courses in the same degree program take precedence. If the department or college owns the space, faculty members' scheduling needs are more often the priority.

A Note of Caution

Faculty buy-in and properly proportioned ambitions are critical to the success of launching an active learning space, argues Malcolm Brown, director of the Educause Learning Initiative. He thinks some institutions take big steps into innovative new spaces without fully thinking through their long-term value.

"It's pretty clear that success in the classroom depends not only on the physical layout and the things that are in the classroom, but also whether faculty are prepared, whether institutions are prepared to take advantage," Brown said. "Fiscal pressure's going to get more real. Schools are going to need more careful choices about learning space and those costs." ■

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/08/25/dartmouth-college-weighs-substantially-growing-undergraduate-population

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