The Trends Report

2016

SPEAKER BEWARE
CULTURE OF CONSENT
PRODUCTIVITY METRICS
THE REACTIVE LEADER
UNSHARED GOVERNANCE
THE OUTSOURCED COLLEGE
RESEARCH SCRUTINY
THE NEW TRANSCRIPT
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN
MARKETING TO SURVIVE
WE’RE HERE TO MAKE MILLIONS OF LIVES BETTER.

Rediscover what makes us a different kind of financial partner at the new TIAA.org
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  B4
A look at what a year of upheaval in higher education means for campus leaders

SPEAKER BEWARE  B6
The latest threats to free speech come from students themselves.

- Some colleges fight back against calls to restrict speech: B8
- He said, she said: Daniel Charnis debated Leah Block at a student tournament. Should he have issued a trigger warning that his topic was a sensitive one? Now they debate again, over that question: B10

CULTURE OF CONSENT  B14
More colleges are trying to prevent sexual assaults before they happen.

- The U. of Central Missouri starts a program to keep sex-assault victims from dropping out: B16
- The U. of New Hampshire teaches students how to intervene in potentially risky situations: B17

PRODUCTIVITY METRICS  B18
Colleges have controversial new tools to assess faculty members, and aren’t shy about using them.

- The U. of Vermont tries a holistic approach to measuring faculty productivity: B20
- David M. Hughes, a faculty-union leader, says data from Academic Analytics, a company used by many colleges, are incomplete and opaque: B20

THE REACTIVE LEADER  B22
College leaders learn that reacting effectively may be more important — and more realistic — than setting the agenda.

- Campus officials who’ve been in the hot seat offer advice: B24

UNSHARED GOVERNANCE  B26
The traditional model of shared governance is eroding as more boards make key decisions unilaterally. The former head of the U. of North Carolina system learned that the hard way.

- William A. Sederburg discusses the pressures that threaten the faculty role in governance: B28

THE OUTSOURCED COLLEGE  B32
More institutions are turning core services like advising, and even teaching, over to private companies.

- The ed-tech company HotChalk sees an opportunity in helping colleges build online programs: B34

RESEARCH SCRUTINY  B36
Corporate influence and outright fraud have hurt the credibility of academic research.

- Some high-profile research scandals make for recent headlines: B37

THE NEW TRANSCRIPT  B39
More colleges want to provide a broader picture of students’ accomplishments, leading to worries about “the quantified student.”

- Campus leaders and a workplace expert discuss the new credentials ecosystem: B40

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN  B41
Everyone’s looking to hire instructional designers, as online learning and new classroom technologies spread.

- A chart tracks the growth of a hot job category: B42

MARKETING TO SURVIVE  B43
Better marketing can help colleges survive enrollment challenges and create stronger identities.

- One university learns it can meet students’ needs by treating them as customers: B44

Illustrations by Eric Petersen for The Chronicle
Welcome to our second annual Trends Report. The past year has seen plenty of upheaval in higher education — student protests over racial inequality, controversies over free speech and so-called trigger warnings, rising complaints over the handling of campus sexual-assault cases, scandals involving academic research, questions about the value of a degree, and more. Look at some of the words that describe this year’s trends: “beware,” “productivity,” “reactive,” “scrutiny,” and “survive.” If there’s a pattern here (or a meta-trend?), it’s that higher education continues to be on the defensive, under growing pressure to respond to critics on and off campus. To stay ahead of their critics, college leaders need to stay ahead of the curve. We hope The Trends Report can help.

Our coverage spells out 10 key shifts in higher education. We examine what’s working (and what’s not), and offer case studies, expert commentary, and resources you can use to start a conversation or a program on your own campuses. Think of it as a briefing on what informed college leaders need to know in 2016. Meanwhile, the trends we identified last year haven’t exactly faded into oblivion. You’ll notice that several of them — most notably, challenges to free speech, an emphasis on helping students build careers, and the influence of social media — have evolved and taken on new forms for this year’s list.

Here are the 10 higher-education trends identified by our reporters and editors, with help from people whose jobs put them on the front lines of academe every day:

- **A fresh wave of attacks on free speech, often coming from students.** Instructors (and even student debaters) are under pressure to provide students with trigger warnings, meant to warn them of potentially upsetting topics. Also contributing to the trend are student protests denouncing a hostile campus climate, and the emergence of watchdog groups that scrutinize campus speech for bias. Some colleges are fighting back.

- **Efforts by colleges to combat sexual assault by creating new cultural norms on the campus.** Under pressure to make sure their handling of sexual-assault cases will stand up under Title IX, some institutions are proactively educating students about the meaning of consent and the importance of intervening to prevent sexual violence.

- **The growing use of metrics to measure faculty productivity.** Colleagues have new tools to see how their professors stack up, and they’re not afraid to use them. Faculty critics say the tools provide an incomplete and inaccurate picture of their jobs.

- **The need for college leaders to react quickly to events that could quickly spin out of control.** “Reactive” used to be seen as a negative label, but in the age of social media, when leaders can no longer control the campus agenda, the ability to react has become a survival skill.

- **Widespread attacks on shared governance.** The traditional model of shared governance is eroding as more governing boards make unilateral changes that ignore faculty opinion, such as appointing someone from outside academe as president. Boards are reacting to fiscal pressure, political heat, and complaints about the cost and value of a degree.

- **The outsourcing of services that are a core part of a college’s mission.** It’s not unusual for colleges to turn the operation of campus bookstores and cafeterias over to private companies, but now they’re also outsourcing some key academic services, like advising and even teaching.

- **Increased scrutiny of academic research.** Corporate influence and outright fraud have undermined the credibility of scientific research. Meanwhile, some fields have been tainted by research scandals involving fabrication and the inability to replicate results.

- **A movement to overhaul the college transcript.** Some colleges are adding new types of information to transcripts to better reflect what students have learned and accomplished. An expanded and digitized transcript may lead to “the quantified student,” but it could also provide a powerful accountability metric that allows colleges to track graduates.

- **The rise of the instructional designer.** As online learning and new classroom technologies spread, the demand for instructional designers — who develop courses that others may teach — is growing.

- **A reliance on better marketing to survive enrollment challenges and create a stronger institutional identity.** The golden rule: Know who your students are, and figure out how best to serve them.

We hope you find The Trends Report helpful. Let us know what you think at chronicle.com/trends.

—The Editors
We cultivate it. We get it.

UConn’s use of seaweed to clean polluted waters helps the environment become more productive and economically viable.

UConn ecology and evolutionary biology professor Charles Yarish is using the expertise that’s made him a globally renowned seaweed specialist to help birth an entirely new industry up and down the East Coast. His numerous seaweed farms soak up nitrogen in polluted waters, and then this virtuous vegetable is harvested for its flavor, vitamins, and nutrients. This is just one way UConn is unleashing the solutions of tomorrow. Discover more at WeGetIt.uconn.edu.
S A POLITICAL-SCIENCE professor at Central Washington University, Mathew S. Manweller has a personal stake in protecting academic freedom. When the Legislature began this year’s session, Mr. Manweller, who is also a state representative, proposed a bill calling for Washington to strongly defend free speech in two of academe’s most contentious debates, over trigger warnings and microaggressions.

Throughout the nation, instructors are under pressure from students to provide them with trigger warnings — advance notice of instructional material that might cause them emotional distress. Meanwhile, colleges have been adopting training programs intended to discourage faculty and staff members from engaging in microaggressions, generally defined as subtle, and often unintentional, expressions of discrimination.

Both developments are highly controversial, cheered as helping to protect students from real harm, derided as coddling students who complain of being upset when exposed to ideas they don’t like. Fueling the debate are other trends subjecting campus speech to intense scrutiny: the rise of social media, which can rapidly turn campus skirmishes into national controversies; the recent explosion of campus protests denouncing colleges as hostile environments for women or minority-group members; and the emergence of watchdog groups dedicated to monitoring administrators and faculty members for political or ideological bias.

Continued on Page B8
It’s time to take a new direction with your financial aid credit balance disbursement.

Protecting the best interests of students and institutions always comes first.

Discover how Blackboard Transact continues to withstand the test of time, exceeding the spirit and intent of regulations by placing the best interests of students and institutions first. With BlackboardPay, the award-winning financial aid disbursement solution, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the community to ensure students’ credit balances are delivered quickly, securely, and in a way that ensures the institution’s compliance with the ever-changing world of federal compliance.

Choice
Allow students to choose which disbursement option is best for them without unsolicited marketing or sharing of sensitive student data.

Speed
Get your students access to their funds in just 15 minutes.

Fee Protection
Protect students from onerous and unnecessary fees and ensure the most fee-free access to their funds than any other provider.


Make campus operations more efficient, get students their funds in minutes without monthly fees and delays, and provide value-added services through electronic delivery of financial aid, student payroll, and other student balances to the campus ID or a stand-alone card.

www.blackboard.com/transact/chronicle

Choice
Allow students to choose which disbursement option is best for them without unsolicited marketing or sharing of sensitive student data.

Speed
Get your students access to their funds in just 15 minutes.

Fee Protection
Protect students from onerous and unnecessary fees and ensure the most fee-free access to their funds than any other provider.

Copyright © 2016. Blackboard Inc. All rights reserved.
**Fielding New Challenges to Campus Speech**

- Trigger warnings are most controversial when instructors are required to issue them or students are allowed to decide on their own to opt out of instructional material they deem upsetting.
- Treating students' requests for trigger warnings strictly as a mental-health issue rather than an instructional one can put new strains on counseling offices.
- Training on how to recognize, and avoid, microaggressions is almost always controversial because the statements at issue can be interpreted differently by different people, and because college employees fear being disciplined for what should be protected free speech.

**Colleges Draw Hard Lines Against Calls to Restrict Speech**

As colleges around the nation face pressure to regulate campus speech, several have pushed back by formally declaring refusals to limit the exchange of ideas. At the forefront is the University of Chicago, which last year adopted a statement on free expression on campuses that is being heralded as a model for colleges elsewhere. Its statement says the university should not try to shield people from ideas "they find un-welcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive," and has a responsibility to ensure visiting speakers on campus are unhindered by student protesters.

The Chicago statement, adopted in January 2015, has inspired Chapman, Princeton, Purdue, and Winston-Salem State Universities, and the University of Virginia's College at Wise, to adopt free-speech declarations that quote it almost verbatim. The Johns Hopkins University adopted a similar declaration, which is more focused on academic freedom and its promotion abroad. The University of Wisconsin system's Board of Regents passed a resolution incorporating both the Chicago and the Johns Hopkins statements.

One of the Chicago statement's most widely copied provisions says that the university, as an institution, should refrain from judging the worthiness of speech, and instead leave it up to people on campus to openly challenge speech that they oppose. "Concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas," it declares.

The statement's opposition to restrictions on speech is evident from its history. Robert J. Zimmer, the University of Chicago's president, and Eric D. Isaacs, its provost, created the committee that devised the statement in the wake of a campus uproar over the use of the word "tranny" by a visiting speaker, the syndicated sex columnist and LGBT activist Dan Savage. Student activists had demanded that the Institute of Politics, which had brought Mr. Savage to campus, apologize for the incident and pledge to prevent any new expression of slurs or hate speech.

Geoffrey R. Stone, a law professor who chaired the Chicago committee, says demands from many students for restrictions on offensive speech betray "a lack of understanding of what the fundamental purpose of a university is." Two prominent advocacy groups, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, have urged colleges throughout the nation to adopt the Chicago statement as an example.

Others are less enthused. Peter W. Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars, has faulted the Chicago statement for failing to consider whether some types of speech, such as deliberate misrepresentations of history, lack academic value that merits their protection. The National Review published a critique arguing that Chicago's pledge to protect even offensive speech was undermined by its continued operation of a "bias response team" — not uncommon in academe — that fields students' complaints of being offended.

Whatever its merits, the statement hardly represents the final word on speech debates at Chicago. President Zimmer and Provost Isaacs acknowledged as much last summer, in a campuswide memo that accused campus activists of violating the statement's principles by disrupting an awards ceremony and occupying part of a building there. The memo said there was a place for protests at the university. But it called the actions of those particular protesters, who were demanding the construction of a trauma center at a university hospital, "directly antithetical to the university’s values" because they blocked the awards event from taking place.

Sara W. Rubinstein, a senior at Chicago and a founder of the campus group Queers United in Power, says she viewed the administration's stand on the trauma-center protests as evidence of how the university's protections of speech are "thrown out the window when marginalized groups say things that challenge those in power." — PETER SCHMIDT
to instructional content they find objectionable for moral or religious reasons.

Among those arguing that faculty members should not be required to give trigger warnings are the American Association of University Professors, other free-speech advocacy groups, and the College Art Association. The faculties of several institutions, including Princeton University and the University of Chicago, have adopted statements emphatically declaring that the need for open debate on campus trumps any student’s desire not to be upset or offended. As The Atlantic reported last fall, some of the sharpest critics of college students’ sensitivities are edgy comedians, who say they either are afraid to deliver their routines on campuses or have found themselves unable to land college gigs.

When colleges have acquiesced to student demands to limit speech, Henry F. (Hank) Reichman, chairman of the AAUP’s Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, blames a growing tendency of their administrations “to look at students as customers, and hence colleges and universities as places where the customer is always right and needs to be satisfied.”

Advocates of trigger warnings or campaigns against microaggressions, meanwhile, emphasize the need to maintain safe campus environments to foster learning, and accuse critics of exaggerating any threats posed to free speech. Although many faculty members have issued trigger warnings on their own, policies requiring such warnings remain rare.

The fight against microaggressions is being waged not through bans but through training programs promoting awareness of how certain words can offend. Although the term “microaggression” has been applied to statements that are widely regarded as legitimate expressions of opinion — such as the assertion that anyone who works hard in America can succeed — it also covers remarks that would be widely seen as insensitive. One commonly cited example: a professor who responds to the presence of black students in a chemistry building by asking them if they are lost.

More broadly, defenders of trigger warnings or campaigns against microaggressions argue that their opponents often are motivated by the desire of those in power to avoid engaging the marginalized. In a recent opinion essay in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Kate Manne, an assistant professor of philosophy at Cornell University, and Jason Stanley, a professor of philosophy at Yale University, wrote: “All too often, when people depict others as threats to freedom of speech, what they really mean is, ‘Quiet!’”

Striking a balance between the two sides remains a difficult task. American University’s Faculty Senate learned as much last fall, after adopting a resolution that treated students’ request for trigger warnings not as an instructional matter...
A Dispute Over Trigger Warnings

Should a college debater have to warn an opponent that the chosen subject is a sensitive one?

Trigger warnings have spread to the world of intercollegiate debate. The issue arose during a debate last fall between teams from Columbia University and New York University. In parliamentary debate style, because the two-person Columbia team chose to argue in favor of legalizing physician-assisted suicide, the NYU team had to argue against it. Columbia won. Afterward an NYU debater filed an “equity complaint” against the Columbia team, saying it had failed to issue a trigger warning on what was for her a highly disturbing topic. She said she should have been allowed to debate another topic.

Both students in this disagreement say trigger warnings have become fairly common in college debates sponsored by the American Parliamentary Debate Association. A Facebook page for the association’s Equal Opportunity Facilitators Program, whose goal is that debates take place in a fair and respectful environment, provides “A Short Guide to Trigger Warnings: Suggestions and Advice for Debating Sensitive Topics.”

Vegas Longlois, a Harvard senior who is head of the facilitators committee, provided a statement from the panel that said it “strongly recommends that all debaters use trigger warnings.” The statement also said: “We want to cultivate an atmosphere where a variety of topics are discussed and do not want to hinder conversa-
tion. However, we want everyone to be able to fully participate in that dialogue and believe trigger warnings further this mission.”

Debaters who did not use trigger warnings would not be penalized, the statement said, but would be asked to discuss whether the debate would have benefited from using them.

The Columbia student said he had been advised to use trigger warnings in the future, but his team’s victory was allowed to stand.

In the following opinion essays — a post-debate debate? — the Columbia student and the NYU student explain their differing views.

By DANIEL CHARNIS

Daniel Charnis is a freshman majoring in computer science-mathematics at Columbia University.

My Rights vs. Your Trigger Warning

“THIS HOUSE would legalize physician-assisted suicide.” That was the topic my partner and I, student debaters from Columbia University, chose for an intercollegiate debate last fall.

Our two opponents, from New York University, flashed smiles at each other as soon as they heard the topic. After a few clarifying questions, they seemed ready to debate, and I expected a great round. We argued that because individuals have a right to life, they also have a right to surrender life, since the difference between rights and obligations is that rights can be forfeited. We added that individuals have rights insofar as those rights do not infringe upon the rights of others, and that suicide is a legitimate option to maximize utility for those who chronically experience negative utility. Our opponents made fair and intelligent rebuttals, and all four of us ended up having what I thought was a very intellectually stimulating discussion about the right to suicide. The judge found Columbia’s arguments more convincing, and we won the debate.

A few hours later, a Columbia teammate informed me that “equity violations” had been filed against my partner and me. Our opponents claimed that, because of the nature of the topic, we needed to have provided a trigger warning and an option to debate a different topic. They said they were unable to debate to their full potential because one of them had emotional issues relating to the topic of suicide.

Their argument was bizarre to me. Both my partner and I took part in debates at the high-school level, where trigger warnings were not given, and where physician-assisted suicide was, in fact, a topic of debate. In college debate, which, unlike high-school debate, is mostly student-run, it is a common practice to give trigger warnings before discussing “sensitive” topics, and if a debater requests it, the topic must be changed. In addition, each tournament designates an “equity officer,” who is also a student debater, to ensure that all debaters are given equal opportunity to compete. For the most part, equity officers have made the parliamentary-debate circuit a much more welcoming place. They can issue an equity violation if they determine that an unfair action has taken place. That can include gender discrimination, physical assault, and disrespectful language — all of which definitely deserve punishment. But in this case, it also included debating an uncomfortable topic. The option to change a debate topic restricts an activity that is meant to celebrate speech and discourse. While it’s one thing to be respectful and politically correct in argumentation (which I full-heartedly support), completely skipping a contentious topic seems antithetical to the fundamental purpose of debate. I find it very strange that as high schoolers, we didn’t need any sort of “protection” against sensitive debate topics, but as college debaters, we suddenly do.

ULTIMATELY, the equity violation didn’t have any major consequences, because it was a first-time offense. We were allowed to keep our win and were let off with a warning to provide trigger warnings in the future. But I see several problems with the practice of providing trigger warnings with an option to change topics in college debate.

First, changing a topic to suit an individual’s preference goes against the spirit of the activity. When I chose to come to a debate tournament, I tacitly agreed to debate any sort of topic, regardless of my personal preference. Introducing boundaries (that are personally decided) on what can or can’t be discussed isn’t what debate is about.

Second, deciding which topics require trigger warnings and which ones don’t is muddy at best. While suicide may have been a sensitive issue for my opponents, how do we know if it is sufficiently universally sensitive that any discussion of it automatically requires a trigger warning? Even if we do somehow agree on a set of topics that merit trigger warnings, that decision would still marginalize certain students who have experiences that, while traumatizing, wouldn’t keep them from discussing them. Rather than try to delineate topics that can be avoided, we should embrace all topics and normalize the discussion of issues that may be sensitive, albeit with respectful rhetoric.

Third, and perhaps most important, avoiding topics on the debate circuit in the short term only harms individuals in the long term. During my (brief) experience on the college-debate circuit, I have found almost all debaters to be welcoming and respectful. The debate environment provides a rare space to discuss emotional issues. When I explained those ideas to the equity officer, I was told that debaters who are badly traumatized by a particular event cannot
In Favor of Trigger Warnings in College Debate

Trigger warnings have become a popular way to preface a debate topic that could involve emotionally disturbing content. While some people might wonder why such warnings are needed in student debate, I believe they are appropriate and important, as I experienced firsthand during a debate round in which the topic was whether physician-assisted suicide should be legal.

Think of a trigger warning as similar to a movie rating: It’s a way for debaters to gauge the appropriateness of a topic for its audience. Yet while partial nudity may warrant a PG-13 rating, trigger warnings are more specific. For instance, if a debate topic involves more than a passing mention of rape, the trigger warning would be for rape and sexual assault. Thus the trigger warning for a debate about legalizing physician-assisted suicide — not just for the terminally ill but also for those who suffer from mental illnesses like depression or anxiety — would be for suicide.

Ideally, the debate team that chooses the topic would provide a trigger warning before the debate starts, when the opponents and judge are present. The proposing team would speak with each debater alone and ask if he or she were comfortable debating the topic. It is generally accepted that topics such as death, assault, and mental illness should have trigger warnings. While it’s impossible to predict every possible trigger, one must use one’s judgment to determine if a topic could be emotionally traumatic. If either of the opponents, or the judge, were uncomfortable for any reason, the debater would be encouraged to choose a different topic.

One thing people need to know about trigger warnings is that they aren’t used to avoid sadness, anger, or frustration. A trigger is a term specifically used to describe an onslaught of anxiety symptoms. Just as pollen can trigger allergies, graphic speech about suicide can trigger anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts — real symptoms of real illnesses. A debater wouldn’t punch a broken arm, and the mental or emotional equivalent should not be treated differently.

The worst part about discussing a triggering topic isn’t the content itself. But I do not think any student debate team should have the right to bypass a particular topic, even if they find it "triggering."

Should my partner and I have given a trigger warning before the debate? Maybe.

Should the discussion of physician-assisted suicide have happened anyway? Definitely.

By LEAH BLOCK

Leah Block is a sophomore majoring in English at New York University.

"My today started when I realized I could be a student and a working mom. My children were in school when I went back for my bachelor's. I was busy with PTA, attending my sons' activities and working full time. Then I decided to earn my graduate degree and my research centered on my passion for online education. So when I decided to pursue my PhD online, the bar was set high. What I found was incredible. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln made it possible for me to juggle a PhD program and the rest of my life. I wasn’t just going through the motions. My research made a difference and is being used across the US and internationally."

KAYE SHELTON, TEXAS
Educational Studies, Specialization in Educational Leadership & Higher Education, PhD
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

4 campuses. 100+ online programs.
online.nebraska.edu

"Today is the day learning turns into leading."
Finding the perfect hire just got a lot easier

Introducing **Vitae Recruiter**, bringing you the brightest talent in higher ed.

Vitae Recruiter, developed for the higher-ed job market, is unlike any other candidate search tool today.

Vitae Recruiter enables you to pinpoint and connect with ideal candidates who match your hiring needs. It is powered by Vitae, the largest higher-ed-only talent community. Save time and money by:

- Viewing detailed, up-to-date faculty, staff, and administrative candidate profiles
- Conducting deep candidate searches with 17+ advanced search filters
- Streamlining your hiring process

**Vitae Recruiter**

**Schedule a demo**

Join.ChronicleVitae.com/Recruiter
(202) 416-1301

A service of The Chronicle of Higher Education
It felt as if my opponent were playing puppet master, pulling my emotions like strings. But there was another, deeper problem with this particular debate: My opponents attempted to dissect a concept they did not understand, while I knew mental illness and its consequences intimately. In the context of a debate, when one team argues in favor of an issue and the other must oppose it, they could not ask for my opinion as someone with experiential knowledge. They had to immediately assume that I was wrong and try to convince the judge. I found myself reliving my experiences with suicidal thoughts, being told what to think and how to feel. And when I gave my own opinion, I was told I was wrong.

In many debates, this is appropriate behavior. When I argue about drone strikes or feminist theory, I expect to be told I’m wrong, and it’s my job to prepare a counterattack. But when the topic is so personal, it is difficult to debate clearly or objectively. Thus I found myself shaking, my brain fogging, my vision blurring — all signs of an anxiety attack — but I had to pretend nothing was wrong so I could present my arguments.

It is unnecessary to put people in this position when it not only interferes with their comfort or triggers anxiety symptoms but also affects their competitive chances. The purpose of debate is to stretch one’s mind intellectually to reach logical conclusions quickly and effectively, and being triggered impedes debaters from doing this. A trigger warning allows them to know what’s coming so they can prepare themselves. But debaters should be able to opt out of a topic that would impede their ability to debate.

Emotional prep time would have helped me in the debate against Columbia. I was unprepared for the topic, and my shock prevented me from thinking clearly. That’s why I didn’t ask the debater to stop the case. If the team had given a trigger warning beforehand, I would have chosen not to debate the topic.

On top of that, I had internalized that having a mental illness was embarrassing and stigmatizing. Those who struggle with symptoms feel they must keep it to themselves. I had not told my partner, who is a close friend, about my experience with depression and suicide before this tournament. Nor had I ever come across triggering language in a debate round before. So when I heard the presented topic, I tried to treat it objectively. But when the Columbia debater said that people with depression had negative utility and therefore had reason to kill themselves — essentially meaning that people with mental illnesses are unproductive and therefore have no reason to live — I was hit with a wave of nausea.

That is why I filed an equity complaint after the debate with the tournament’s equity officer, whose job is to make sure that everyone is treated fairly. When she asked me what I wanted to do, I was initially torn. Truthfully, I was angry that I’d lost a round because of forces outside of my control, and I wanted the equity officer to award my team the win (though I never said so out loud). But my complaint was about more than that: I wanted to help prevent others from being triggered during a debate. Debaters’ mental health is more important than competitive success. The equity officer said she would talk to Columbia’s team president about using trigger warnings in the future, and I agreed.

College students — including those on the debate circuit — don’t give up their weekends to relive the lowest, most painful moments of their lives. And that is the crux of this debate over trigger warnings: Why would anyone want to pollute an extracurricular activity with trauma? By failing to use a trigger warning, you ruin a person’s experience, chance at competitive success, and mental well-being. And what are the negative consequences of using a trigger warning? I have yet to discover any, but I invite the Columbia debater to tell me.
Culture of Consent

Colleges focus on preventing sex assaults before they happen

By ROBIN WILSON

It’s the high-profile cases of campus sex assault that catch everyone’s attention. There was the Columbia University undergraduate who carried a mattress around the campus her entire senior year to protest what she believed was the institution’s mishandling of her assault complaint. And the athlete who was expelled for assault at the University of Tennessee but was allowed to return and graduate after a court said the institution had misjudged his case.

Those situations not only capture the public eye but also strain campus judicial systems, causing colleges to scramble to stay out of court and off the U.S. Education Department’s list of institutions being investigated for violations under the gender-equity law known as Title IX.

So, while they’re under scrutiny for their handling of assault complaints, colleges are also working to prevent such cases before they ever happen. They’re using in-person and online training programs, as well as social-media campaigns, to educate undergraduates about what constitutes assault and how they can help prevent it. Some professors are tucking messages about how to avoid assault into French, computer-science, and communications classes. And at least one institution, the University of Central Missouri, has begun tracking students who have already experienced assault to make sure they go on to graduate.

“Title IX response is so much bigger than having a code and a couple of investigators,” says Peter Lake, director of the Center for Higher Education Law and Policy at Stetson University College of Law. “It’s a culture change.”

Continued on Page B16
We don’t like to brag, so we’ll let others do it for us.

At University of California, Irvine, we’re always glad to hear our efforts are paying off. For over 50 years, we’ve been committed to providing an exceptional learning and research environment that has real-world impact across the globe.

In addition to the Top 10 Public University accolade, UCI was voted “Top Value University” and “#1 College for Beach Lovers” by Money, “#1 Top College Doing Most for Low-Income Students” by the New York Times, “#19 Lowest Student Debt” by Kiplinger, and “#1 Coolest School” two years running by the Sierra Club for our sustainability efforts.

UCI.edu
Shine brighter
Preventing Sexual Assault

- Colleges are using in-person and online programs, along with messages on posters, bookmarks, and screen savers to educate students about what constitutes assault and what they can do to prevent it.
- The most popular method of assault prevention on campuses is bystander intervention. Several colleges, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit companies have designed programs to teach students how to recognize and help head off situations that could lead to assault.
- Professors at some colleges are getting involved in prevention efforts, working anti-assault messages into their syllabi and even their curricula.

New regulations enforcing the federal Violence Against Women Act took effect last summer and require colleges to focus on preventing assaults before they occur. The regulations say all new students must be informed about safe options that an individual may take to “prevent harm or intervene in risky situations.”

Last year President Obama announced a similar campaign to end sexual assault, called “It’s On Us.” Well-known actors appear in a short video encouraging Americans to pledge to keep an eye on their friends — particularly in situations involving alcohol — and to step in and stop a potentially harmful scenario.

“Get in the way by creating a distraction, drawing attention to the situation, or separating them,” says the campaign. “Never blame the victim.”

Mr. Lake says the focus on prevention is changing how campuses look at sex assault. “Training people how to adjudicate assault cases is Job One,” he says. “But campuses see how frustrating it is to try to defeat sex assault with adjudication techniques alone. Title IX coordinators are now starting to become almost like an academic department, teaching people about culture change.”

The most popular method of assault prevention on campuses is known as bystander intervention. The concept is to show students how to identify potentially violent situations and intervene safely and effectively. That’s the goal of one of the most popular programs, called Green Dot. It was developed in 2008 at the University of Kentucky by Dorothy Edwards, who directed the Violence Intervention and Prevention Center there. In 2010 she made Green Dot into a stand-alone, nonprofit company that now helps colleges deliver bystander training and other prevention strategies to faculty and staff members, administrators, and students. A green dot represents “any behavior, choice, word, or attitude that promotes safety,” says the organization’s website. The idea is that as more green-dot behavior develops there will be fewer “red dot” incidents — meaning sex assaults.

Getting students to step in and possibly stop a risky situation — say, a female friend is drinking heavily at a party with a new guy, and they decide to go off somewhere on their own — can be difficult, says Ms. Edwards. “If it were easy, everyone would do it. But even good people who see something high-risk often don’t act. They say, I’m shy, I don’t want to be the squeaky wheel, I don’t want this to become a fight.”

Indeed, Rebecca Plante, an Ithaca College sociologist who studies the campus sexual climate, calls bystander-intervention initiatives “laudable but somewhat utopian.” The associate professor adds, “They presume a lot: That students at a party are sober and that they’ve paid attention to anything other than themselves.” Young people, she says, prize their independence. “They say: Anna and Joe just went into Joe’s room. I’ve heard Joe’s scum, but I don’t want to tell her who to sleep with, because I don’t want her judging me.”

Professors on other campuses are getting involved. At Virginia Commonwealth University, the political-science department is offering a new course this spring devoted to Title IX. In a French course there, students read a text by Guy de Maupassant and its film version, by Jean Renoir, called A Day in the Country. In both works, there is a scene that may or may not be interpreted as sexual assault.

Gail Hackett, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Virginia Commonwealth, says students need a “safe space” to talk about issues of sexual violence, where professors can guide the conversations.

“The deep discussions needed for understanding and addressing issues of sexual violence,” she says, “are well suited to a classroom environment.”

For Assault Victims, Help Is Never Too Late

The University of Central Missouri has started a program to keep students who have been sexually assaulted from dropping out. Corey Bowman, associate vice provost for student services, last spring started tracking about 50 students who had experienced gender-based violence, either before enrolling or while they were at Central Missouri. The prevention program is on alert for students who may be struggling as a result of gender-based violence, whether in the classroom or in their efforts to get along with roommates, arrange child care, afford tuition, or handle other personal matters.

The program evolved from the university’s work with students who had visited the Title IX office with concerns about sex assault and harassment. “We meet with these students on a regular basis — we don’t wait for them to come to us,” says Mr. Bowman, who says 78 percent of students whom the prevention program worked with last spring came back this fall, compared with 71 percent for the general student population.

The program is a natural fit with the university’s wider student-success and risk-reduction efforts, says Mr. Bowman.

“We identified victims of gender violence as having heightened risk due to the complex and far-reaching impact of trauma,” he says. “We then hired a case manager and developed a trauma-informed process that would focus on not just recovery but long-term student success.”

“Students who have experienced gender-based violence,” Mr. Bowman says, “are more likely to be retained and graduate if they have ongoing access to a trusted primary contact at the university who can act as both a guide and a barrier buster.”

— ROBIN WILSON
One University Prepares Students to Intervene

THE University of New Hampshire’s campaign to prevent sex assault is based on two programs: “Bringing in the Bystander” was developed in 2002 as an in-person training program that the university’s Prevention Innovations Research Center sells to colleges. The program teaches people to safely intervene when a situation looks as if it could become dangerous, and it is aimed at increasing their willingness to do so.

The other program, “Know Your Power,” is a newer social-marketing effort that uses 26 images depicting real-life scenarios to promote bystander behaviors.

New Hampshire’s is thought to be the nation’s only research center working to develop prevention strategies based on a scholarly evaluation of what’s effective, says Jane Stapleton, co-director of the center. “We’re developing evidence-based prevention,” she says. So far the center has worked with nearly 450 other colleges.

“Know Your Power” images can be tailored to depict the ethnic composition of the student population on individual campuses and to show specific ways students party at different institutions — in private homes or garages, for example, or with red Solo cups or beer cans. The images even use the names that students call drinking games on particular campuses. A poster at New Hampshire, for example, refers to beer pong as “Beirut.”

“The more students see themselves in the images, the higher the effectiveness,” says Ms. Stapleton. The images often are made into screen savers, posters, stickers, and bookmarks. “We have collected anecdotal information from students who said, ‘I was at a party, I saw a friend who was intoxicated and she was led upstairs by a guy she didn’t know. I wasn’t sure what to do, but then I remembered seeing the image on the back of a bathroom stall.’”

While New Hampshire has published scholarly papers showing that students recall the images, the research doesn’t specify the extent to which that finding may actually have led to a reduction in sexual assault on campuses. The use of bystander intervention is so new, says Mr. Stapleton, that such studies have not yet been designed.

— R.W.

A Healthy Trend: Fresh Ideas for Educating Tomorrow’s Caregivers

Informatics. Motivational interviewing. Diversity competence. Apps. None of these terms were around when nursing professor Donna Plozczynski began teaching 20 years ago at Northern Illinois University. Today her students know them well, thanks to her.

By sharing real cases from her ongoing work as a nurse practitioner, and fresh ideas from her research in health promotion and motivation, Dr. Plozczynski is instructing and mentoring future healthcare leaders. Her students come away from her rigorous courses ready to work competently, collaboratively and ethically. They are also set to be at the forefront of healthcare’s revolutionary changes.

“Students who come to NIU are trendsetters,” Dr. Plozczynski says. “They want to be one of those change-agents who make a difference, and we are committed to helping them accomplish their goals.”

Northern Illinois University
Your Future, Our Focus
QUESTIONS about faculty productivity are nothing new. But the growing use of metrics to assess faculty activity has raised the stakes at a time when colleges already face growing pressure to demonstrate accountability and compete with peer institutions.

Meanwhile, questions about how to measure a scholar’s influence in social media, known as “altmetrics,” are expected to add to the debate over faculty productivity.

One company that colleges turn to for help with metrics is Academic Analytics, which allows colleges to compare the peer-reviewed publications, journal citations, federal research grants, and other honors of their faculty members with those at peer institutions. The company says it has more than doubled the number of colleges it works with, to about 100, over the past five years.

At public colleges, the pressure to measure faculty productivity often comes from legislators. But all types of institutions are increasingly paying more attention to remaining competitive with their peers, says Peter Lange, chief academics adviser at the South Carolina-based company and a former provost of Duke University.

Such efforts haven’t always been executed with finesse. Texas A&M University, for example, issued a report in 2011 that listed faculty members’ names in red or black — like a corporate balance sheet — depending on whether the research and tuition dollars they generated covered their salary and expenses. Such heavy-handed efforts usually crumble under faculty opposition. Texas A&M abandoned its plan amid faculty objections to the perceived corporatization of the university as well as the accuracy of the data.

Winning over faculty members — or at least avoiding a revolt — is key to the long-term success of evaluation efforts, and administrators must strike a balance between their needs and faculty concerns.
“The most important thing,” says Gary A. Olson, president of Daemen College, “is to make sure you have faculty buy-in. If you have them helping in the production of the measurement instrument, you have the best chance of coming up with an instrument that everybody’s happy with.”

Pleasing everyone, though, may be impossible. Many faculty members, especially in the arts and humanities, are distrustful of faculty analytics. “They’re trying to run creative thinking through a machine,” says Mark Usher, chair of the classics department at the University of Vermont. While the university works with Academic Analytics, it does not require the use of company data for evaluation, and recently asked each of its academic units to develop its own faculty-productivity metrics.

Mr. Usher says the metrics aren’t meaningful without context and often aren’t even accurate. He echoes faculty members on many campuses who have complained that reports based on metrics often show deflated grant awards and incorrect journal citations, and omit publications that should be included (and vice versa).

For example, he says, Academic Analytics had included Acta Astronautica, a publication he’d never heard of, as a classics journal. “What is that?” he asks, “Like, the study of UFOs?” (It’s an astronautics journal.)

Company officials acknowledge that assessing faculty productivity in the arts and humanities is tougher than in the sciences and engineering, where quantified measurements are the norm.

At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, visiting committees, comprising members from academia, business, industry, and government, have reviewed each department since the 19th century. These days, those committees receive data compiled by Academic Analytics, which allows comparisons with peers. But administrators must be cognizant of disciplinary differences, says Lydia Snover, director of institutional research at MIT, and must put the data in context with other indicators of productivity, which the company’s data don’t measure.

Peer-reviewed publications may be an effective productivity metric for some departments. For others, like computer science, which produce fewer papers, the metrics might be citations per publication, or conferences per faculty member, or honors and awards. Federal grants could be a productivity metric for a department like chemistry, but not for engineering, since engineering faculty members at MIT receive a large share of grants from private sources that aren’t captured by Academic Analytics’ data.

Moreover, Ms. Snover says, colleges must make clear that faculty-productivity metrics will be placed in the context of a faculty member’s broader body of work. “A lot of this,” she says, “is just to be able to provide some comparative data that isn’t hearsay. It’s not perfect. It’s impossible to be perfect in these areas.”

Some say the next faculty-productivity battlefield might be altmetrics, a term used to describe alternative methods of gauging scholarly impact, including the use of blogs, news coverage, and social media. How many times was a tweet about your research retweeted, or “liked” on Facebook? Such measures have made headway in Britain but are still a gray area in the United States, says Anthony J. Olejniczak, chief knowledge officer of Academic Analytics.

“It’s not exactly clear where that line between what is scholarly and what is media is ultimately going to be settled,” he says. “But a blurring of that line is clearly something that has been happening in the last few years.”

Proponents of faculty analytics say the quality and accuracy of data have improved and will continue to do so as technology evolves. But the debate over how meaningful those data are won’t be settled anytime soon.
Academic Analytics: Buyer Beware

“O

PAQUE, gameable, and just plain wrong!” That was the judgment rendered by one of my colleagues on Academic Analytics, our university’s shiny new measurement tool. Why had Rutgers University — proud of its intellectual culture and its rigorous standards for faculty promotion — chosen possibly the worst bibliometric program available? Let me explain.

In 2013 our administration signed a contract under which this company would make its database accessible to approved users. Academic Analytics crawls the Internet and, it says, has assembled profiles of more than 270,000 scholars at more than 385 colleges in the United States and abroad. The database enumerates “scholarly productivity” in a handful of categories: books, journal articles, citations, published conference proceedings, federal funding, and honorific awards. In the world of Academic Analytics, nothing else counts. In other words, the database tells faculty members what they already know about themselves in a fashion that is incomplete and often erroneous. From 2013 to 2017, Rutgers will waste $492,000 on this digital lemon.

Worse still, Academic Analytics actually presents a danger to higher education everywhere. Acting on members’ concerns, Rutgers’s faculty union, of which I am president, has sought to protect the integrity of tenure procedures. As at many universities, a tenure candidate at Rutgers may inspect the entirety of his or her tenure file with the sole exception of external reference letters. Department chairs and deans may consult bibliometric data sets — Google Scholar, for instance — but only because the candidate also has access to those public resources.

Academic Analytics is different. The firm restricts access to its proprietary data set. In theory, subscribing universities could approve all faculty members as users, but, to my knowledge, none does. I obtained my scores after a request under New Jersey’s Open Public Records Act. At Rutgers, rank-and-file faculty members do not receive the necessary passwords. In December, therefore, we asked the administration formally to exclude Academic Analytics from the tenure-and-promotion process. The faculty of the School of Arts and Sciences in New Brunswick voted 92-20 in favor of this demand. In response, administrators have promised orally not to use Academic Analytics — but only one dean on our main New Brunswick campus has put that commitment in writing.

We have made even less progress on our second demand: that data from Academic Analytics not be used in any decisions involving the allocation of resources within the university. The Arts and Sciences faculty voted overwhelmingly in favor of that demand as well. Deans acknowledge using the database in comparing and ranking departments, and that is why I believe Academic Analytics poses a profound, long-term threat.

How One University Measured Faculty Productivity — and Nobody Got Hurt

W

HEN David V. Rosowsky became provost of the University of Vermont, in 2013, he wanted it to begin competing more aggressively for students, and to do so nationally. “The regional-market basket model is no longer going to meet all of our needs,” he says.

Data on faculty productivity were needed not only to help strengthen programs but also to place Vermont in the context of peer institutions, he says. Colleges face intense competition for students, and must use data, and not just anecdotes, to show how they stand out, Mr. Rosowsky argues.

The provost didn’t want to rely on “canned third-party metrics,” he says, so he started a campuswide discussion about what data could responsibly be used to measure scholarly productivity. He asked deans and departments across the university to develop their own forms of metrics.

The effort met some resistance, but not the acrimony and distrust often created when administrators try to quantify creativity. “I was cognizant that ‘metrics’ is a charged word,” Mr. Rosowsky says. “I was very careful to say they are not one-size-fits-all, and some of these should be discipline-specific.”

Allowing the academic community to take over the process was “absolutely crucial” to its success, says Paul Deslandes, chair of the history department. “People in the humanities always resist these efforts because they see it as an imposition of a model from another area of scholarship, namely the sciences. But now that we’ve come up with a document that very much pays attention to what people in the humanities actually do, people are more comfortable with it.”

The history department, for example, decided to measure faculty productivity with metrics that include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and research money, but also measurements more specific to the discipline: museum exhibitions, documentary-film advising, and digital archiving.

Some colleges, including the business school, created a tiered ranking of journals — a faculty member would receive eight points for being published in a top-ranked journal, down to one point for a “fourth-tier” journal. Accruing more points would mean reduced course loads. Earn 24 points — three publications in a top-tier journal — and see your teaching expectation for the year drop from five to three courses. Earn fewer than six points, however, and you might get a sixth course to teach.

Other programs at Vermont counted the number of Ph.D. recipients produced or graduate students’ success on the job market. The College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, which was already using the number of Google Scholar citations in its annual evaluations, planned to consider, among other metrics, coverage of faculty research in the popular press when determining its teaching loads.

While the university subscribes to Academic Analytics, a company that benchmarks faculty-productivity metrics, departments aren’t required to use it, Mr. Rosowsky says. “Some departments use it because it’s robust and close to being complete. Others will find it’s neither robust nor complete in their disciplines and will look elsewhere.”

Mark Usher, chair of the classics department at Vermont, says trying to quantify creativity isn’t wise. He gives credit to Mr. Rosowsky, however, for being transparent and involving faculty members in the process. The communication, he says, “kept the natives from being too restless here.”

An absence of restlessness doesn’t necessarily result in enthusiasm, however. Will the metrics be used in a meaningful way that will allow programs to improve? Mr. Rosowsky hopes so, but for an answer, he says, check back in a few years.

— VIMAL PATEL
Because it counts achievement along only the axes mentioned above, the database — and any administrator relying even partially upon it — establishes incentives to do only what counts. Under this logic, the strategically minded professor or department might then stop engaging in less conventional and less measurable activities, such as public scholarship, community engagement, software, patents, films, book chapters, articles in less well-known journals, and nonfederal grants — not to mention teaching and service. The database even discourages book publishing, by conflating edited and single-author works.

Ultimately, then, this company — and the universities that deal with it — may significantly distort and narrow the contributions that faculty members make to collective wisdom and democratic discourse. Colleges that subscribe to Academic Analytics are, in effect, recasting faculty members as makers of knowledge widgets.

Here, as in Britain, where metrics to evaluate research have been highly controversial, we need to claw our way back to standards that are qualitative, faculty-determined, and institution-specific.

I believe that Academic Analytics will fail for a simpler reason: its own embarrassing inaccuracies. Even within the narrow range it measures, the firm makes unpredictable mistakes. I obtained my profile after a freedom-of-information request. I learned that I had published two books and three articles in the given time windows. In fact, I had published two books and one article. Where did Academic Analytics find the two (possibly brilliant) texts I didn’t write? Because of such errors, the database is losing legitimacy. None of the many deans with whom I have spoken actually trust the spreadsheet. Still, they consider Academic Analytics useful for sales and branding. With metrics, an administration can claim to have the best [name of most opportune department] in the country.

Indeed, wily colleges can “massage” the data. The firm’s voluntary submission process allows institutions to curate the faculty members reviewed by Academic Analytics. To raise the institution’s profile, a savvy dean could keep out of view any professors who aren’t producing articles at full tilt. A Rutgers dean confessed his regret to me at having overlooked this loophole. Rutgers is wasting its money. Your college may have entered this same high-priced contest of implausible boasts. At the end of this story, Big Data — which ought to promote honesty and transparency — kicks off a deceptive, meaningless game of numbers.

Can Metrics Measure Professors?

- Colleges are increasingly using data to measure their faculty members’ productivity and to compare them with professors at peer institutions. Professors complain that such metrics provide an inaccurate and incomplete picture of their activities, but colleges say the careful use of data from an outside source provides credibility.

- Gaining faculty approval is key to the long-term success of any effort to measure faculty productivity.

- Administrators need to be sensitive to disciplinary differences: A metric that works in civil engineering might not work in English or, for that matter, chemical engineering.
When student complaints about racist posts on Yik Yak heated up at American University last spring, Cornelius M. (Neil) Kerwin did what a veteran college president might be expected to do. He wrote an open letter to the campus calling out the “bigotry, ignorance, and intolerance” of such messages and pledging to promote more-positive ways to “express our differences.” He held an open forum to seek solutions from the campus, and called for unconscious-bias training for administrators and faculty members, among other measures.

But the racist posts continued into the fall, and students “raised the question of whether or not the university administration, and in particular me, were responding adequately and quickly enough,” Mr. Kerwin says.

In the age of Yik Yak and Twitter, he may not have been. Campus controversies are nothing new, but social media has changed the stakes for college presidents and other academic leaders. What might have remained a campus issue a decade ago can now go viral overnight. And with most people seeing an endless stream of posts and responses on their smartphones, expectations have risen that leaders be just as quick, always ready to say and do the right thing.

Being reactive has long been considered a leadership flaw, but college leaders now must develop an ability to respond quickly and effectively to unexpected incidents before they get worse — and to avoid making them worse themselves. Events at the University of Missouri last fall point to the dangers of letting contentious situations fester. Complaints and protests over the racial climate there mounted over the course of the year, and black students became so dissatisfied with the lack of attention from Timothy M. Wolfe, the system’s president, that they began openly calling for his resignation. A graduate student went on a hunger strike, and members of the football team refused to play until he stepped down. Mr. Wolfe resigned in November, as did R. Bowen Loftin, chancellor of the flagship campus, at Columbia.

Continued on Page B25
The future of medicine will use cell-based therapies to unravel and treat the world’s most challenging diseases. And Nova Southeastern University is at the forefront with the new NSU Cell Therapy Institute — a collaboration with international biomedical research scientists from the world-renowned Karolinska Institutet.

Richard Jove, Ph.D., will lead the institute and its world-class team of researchers. Dr. Jove is known for his decades-long work as professor and director of the Molecular Oncology Program at the Moffitt Cancer Center Research Institute in Tampa, and associate director for basic research of Moffitt’s National Cancer Institute Comprehensive Cancer Center. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Jove has also served as chair of molecular medicine and director of the Beckman Research Institute at City of Hope in Los Angeles.

NSU’s Cell Therapy institute will be based in the innovative Center for Collaborative Research (CCR), opening on NSU’s Fort Lauderdale/Davie campus in 2016. The CCR will house a supercomputer, one of Florida’s largest wet labs, the NSU Technology Incubator, and 200 research projects, in addition to some of the world’s most accomplished researchers.

To learn more about the innovative research happening at NSU, visit nova.edu/research.
Have a plan. Presidents should assemble a group of advisers whom they can call on quickly in a crisis, says James H. Newberry Jr., a lawyer who counsels colleges. The group should include senior administrators as well as communications and social-media specialists. Looking for outside public-relations help at the last minute could delay a response by several news cycles, and “that’s a killer,” he says.

Think before you speak. It is important for leaders to respond quickly to a controversy, but an ill-considered response can make matters worse. “Attempt to respond in substance very quickly, and it’s easy to make a mistake or overlook something,” says Cornelius M. (Neil) Kerwin, president of American University. A quick statement that sounds tin-eared or clueless about the issue at hand can prompt a reaction that makes things even more contentious. Then, says Mr. Kerwin, “you begin to lose control over your own narrative.”

But don’t overthink. Academics tend toward deliberation and lengthy, nuanced answers, which don’t often cut it in a situation stoked by social media. “Brevity and specificity and directness are highly valued,” Mr. Kerwin says.

Give empathy, and you might get empathy. “The first thing you have to be able to project is that you’re listening, you understand, and you’re empathetic,” says Robert Moore, president of Lipman Hearne, a marketing-and-communications firm that works with colleges. Even if a leader doesn’t have all the answers to a controversy right away, “if you are seen to be somebody who is sincerely trying to get to the bottom of things and understand the underlying issues, you’re given a little leeway.”

Stay focused. Controversies on campus may play into larger societal problems, but it’s important for presidents to stay focused on the people connected to their institutions, says Rita H. Cheng, president of Northern Arizona University. She advises against getting “tied up in the larger, national political agenda, but really looking at the facts and the current on-campus needs.”

— LEE GARDNER

In Case of Emergency: Advice From Campus Leaders

The speed and reach of social media demand that leaders be prepared to react.

A response must not only be swift but also respond to concerns effectively.

Leaders must be aware of key conversations taking place on the campus.

TAKEAWAY

How Leaders Should React

The MPOWER Private Loan

200 universities.
Students from 180 countries.
0 co-signers.

Built to support your university and integrate seamlessly with its systems, the MPOWER Private Loan solves unique challenges facing international students.

Issues with financial gaps due to exchange rates?
Budgeting shortfalls?
Unforeseen housing or travel complications?

MPower loans were created with these issues in mind. It’s why MPOWER offers student loans without the need for a U.S. co-signer or credit score. And because MPOWER loans are designed for high potential students, there is no financial commitment or risk-share from the school.

Visit mpowerfinancing.com to learn more about how we can help your international students.

Together, let’s welcome students into a world of opportunities.

For more information contact us at:
schools@mpowerfinancing.com
By appearing not to take activists’ concerns seriously for months, Mr. Wolfe made the situation more explosive, and by not responding more effectively once he did get involved, he made the situation worse, says Robert Roberts, president of Lipman Hearne, a marketing-and-communications company that works with colleges. He calls Mr. Wolfe’soust “a self-inflicted wound.”

College presidents are not typically predisposed for crisis communications. Top leaders tend to come from within academe, which prizes deliberation, nuance, and taking the long view, says Adam Shapiro, a public-relations specialist who works with colleges. The quicker tempo and volatile nature of today’s social-media landscape require college leaders to adapt “a completely different set of skills to react on a dime,” he says.

One of the best ways to react more effectively is to be aware of as many potential issues as you can, says Mr. Moore. That means keeping up with conversations taking place among faculty, staff, and students, both in person and online. Top academic leaders can’t monitor social media every hour of the day, but they can have lunch in the dining halls periodically, or follow faculty leaders on Twitter. They have to make an effort “to swim with the fishes,” Mr. Moore says. “If you’re not doing that, then suddenly you find yourself confronted with an issue that you haven’t had time to think about.”

When a crisis arises, leaders have little time to think — at least not as much as they would probably like. “Effective communication in a crisis is all about time,” says Gene Grabowski, a consultant who handles crisis communications for colleges and is a partner at Kglobal, a public-relations company. Upset students can use social media to control the narrative if a leader waits too long to deal with an important issue.

While any response to a serious controversy must come from the top, it’s important that the president not operate in a vacuum. “The best way to avoid making a mistake is to have an effective sounding board to help guide you to some of those decisions when you’ve got to make the call quickly,” says James H. Newberry Jr., a lawyer who counsels colleges. Having a short list of senior managers and communications specialists to call on can make the difference between a response that helps and a response that makes the situation worse.

Last fall Rita H. Cheng, president of Northern Arizona University, coped with a shooting on the campus in which a student was killed. At the same time, she was facing unrelated questions about the university’s racial climate. In both cases, she found it important to be accessible and honest. If you have information or a ready solution, share it, she says. If you don’t have an answer, let people know that you’ll update them as soon as you do.

Mr. Kerwin, meanwhile, is about to offer a series of proposals for how to make American University a more inclusive community. He credits student activists with making it clear that the racial tensions on the campus could no longer go unaddressed.

He also credits the events of last year for improving how both he and the university monitor and respond to volatile situations.

American’s office of communications and marketing now uses software to monitor social media 24 hours a day, listening to what people are saying about the university, good and bad. If something posted online might require action, the university has refined its social-media policy to clarify how and when to react.

Keeping on top of the “ubiquitous and perpetual” scrub of online discourse is daunting and labor-intensive, Mr. Kerwin says. But it provides a valuable window into what is important to people on the campus.

“You may not like very much what you’re learning,” he says, “but it’s better to know it, by and large, so at least you’re given the opportunity to decide if some action is needed.”

---

**Embrace the Possibilities**

It is often human nature to find the greatest comfort with those most like us—whether we focus on gender, race, national origin, language, faith tradition, identity and orientation, disability, socioeconomic status or political interests.

**Webster University**

Webster University’s mission and presence in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa encourages connections among us that transcend our sameness. A global perspective transforms the limitations of individual experiences and helps us understand ourselves and each other as members of a globally diverse community.

*With its home campus in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, Webster University comprises an action-oriented global network of faculty, staff, students and alumni who forge powerful bonds with each other and with their communities around the globe. Founded in 1915, Webster is a private non-profit university with more than 17,000 students studying at campus locations in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa and in a robust learning environment online. The university is committed to delivering high-quality learning experiences that transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence.*
One fall morning in 2014, Thomas W. Ross, then president of the University of North Carolina system, arrived at his office ready for a full day of meetings. But he wasn’t ready for an unscheduled meeting with John C. Fennebresque, chairman of the system’s Board of Governors at the time, who asked him to step down.

Mr. Ross, who left office this year, was popular with faculty members, staff members, and students. He had been appointed to the position only in 2010. But between that time and his dismissal, control of the state legislature had changed parties, and Republican lawmakers had appointed a new set of trustees.

The board gave no clear explanation for asking for his resignation, saying the call for change had “nothing to do with President Ross’s performance.”

Mr. Ross has his own explanation: “What happened was entirely, or mostly, political — no question,” he said in December, just weeks after the governing board named Margaret Spellings, who served as education secretary under President George W. Bush, as the new system president. Once again, the board bypassed higher education’s longstanding model of shared governance, which traditionally gives faculty members a voice in the search process.

The events in North Carolina are just one example of something that’s happening more often in higher education: A governing board makes a significant leadership or policy change that contradicts or simply ignores the opinions of faculty members and of other employees. Faculty members worry that this trend is part of a widespread attack on shared governance.

Continued on Page B30
HOW DOES ONE VISIONARY SEE THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE?

BY THE NUMBERS.

National trends, new models of care and other forces are driving the evolution of health care and the study of population health management. Rosalind Franklin University is employing the power of metrics to track performance in relation to our institutional goals and aspirations.

As provost and visionary expert on interprofessional education, Dr. Wendy Rheault is leading this effort to align RFU’s priorities with the nation’s anticipated healthcare needs through the sheer, undeniable strength in those numbers.

Her insights are helping align how we teach, train and professionally develop our students with the nation’s Triple Aim of improving healthcare costs, quality and outcomes.

Numbers reveal an impressive story that’s unfolding now at Rosalind Franklin University.
The Uncertain Future of University Governance

By WILLIAM A. SEDERBURG

William A. Sederburg is a former Utah commissioner of higher education, Republican state legislator in Michigan, and interim chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He has served as president of Utah Valley University and Ferris State University.

THE TRADITIONAL MODEL of university governance is eroding, and my state, North Carolina, may be a harbinger of things to come. The shift was especially apparent with the recent appointment of Margaret Spellings, education secretary under George W. Bush, as president of the University of North Carolina system. She replaces Thomas W. Ross, who was ousted by the board for no publicly stated reason. She comes to the job with limited experience in higher education, no advanced degree, and a reputation as a strong conservative administrator. Her appointment, and the secretive search process that led to it, has raised concern among administrators and has been strongly criticized by the university’s Faculty Assembly.

As a former state commissioner of higher education, Republican legislator, and interim chancellor of UNC-Wilmington, I offer some insights into what Ms. Spellings’s appointment may spell for the future. I believe five factors will hugely influence the higher-education agenda, both in North Carolina and nationally, and help define the role of state higher-education executive officers like Ms. Spellings.

First, there is increasing interest in hiring leaders from outside higher education. In my state, that has contributed to educators’ angst over the ambiguous future agenda of the system president and the Board of Governors. One administrator told me, “At our school we have no clue as to what the future agenda will be.” A private consulting firm, instead of an open planning process, is being used to help set the agenda, giving legislators, foundations, and outside groups more influence.

The second factor is the widely held expectation that public institutions must work as part of a larger network, and not as individual fiefdoms. The historical model of universities as stand-alone enterprises, with their own mission, admission standards, and academic programming, is not as applicable as it once was. Public universities, private colleges, community colleges, technical schools, and online institutions will increasingly be seen as nodes on multiple networks, and not as institutions with unique, well-defined roles.

The state executive officer’s role will shift from overseeing specific institutional issues to building multiple networks among and between institutions. Issues such as early-college high schools, credit-transfer policies, competency certificates, admission standards, online courses, common course numbering, and financial-aid coordination will dominate the future agenda.

The third factor is the expectation that these networks will better align themselves with the needs of the economy. Specifically, degrees should help students find good jobs. State executive officers will be expected to be partners with researchers, venture capitalists, and work-force-development agencies. They will spend much of their time on issues such as intellectual-property transfer, work-force planning, certificate-to-credit programs, and industry contracts.

The emphasis on jobs might also result in less interest in the liberal arts and social-justice issues. One example in North Carolina is the Board of Governors’ extensive review of university-affiliated institutes in 2015 and the resulting closure of the Center on Poverty, Work, and Opportunity at Chapel Hill.

The fourth factor is economics. Rising higher-education costs have hit a tipping point in public opinion. President Obama’s remarks in his latest State of the Union address reflected the current climate. “Of course, it’s not enough for us to increase student aid,” he said. “We can’t just keep subsidizing skyrocketing tuition; we’ll run out of money!”

Financial considerations are at play in many states. Systemic factors driving price, such as college athletics, auxiliary enterprises, facilities, and pension costs, will increasingly become a state rather than an institutional issue. Mandatory student fees, particularly for athletics, will be carefully scrutinized, as they were last year by North Carolina’s Board of Governors. The board also set a cap on tuition recommended by individual campuses, a trend we can expect to see continue.

The final factor is the increasing anti-government mood of the American voter. In 2010 political power in North Carolina shifted away from progressive Democrats toward conservative Republicans. The new majority is very interested in imposing a conservative agenda and shaking up the status quo, which led to the ouster of President Ross. It was a controversial move, and UNC faculty members were very critical of it.

I am now leading a committee for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities that is calling for states to create a new social contract between political leaders and higher education — specifically, “to craft a shared public agenda predicated on mutual understanding, trust, and accountability.”

There may be room for optimism in North Carolina: The legislature moderately increased higher-education spending last year. And at the urging of our Republican governor, Pat McCrory, legislators passed a $2-billion bond for higher-education buildings. It will be interesting to see how our leaders respond to the need to build a network of colleges, connect that network to the economic system, keep costs down, and establish a new social contract.

The nation should watch the North Carolina experience very closely. It may be a precursor of the new politics of higher education.
NATIONAL MODEL FOR A BETTER STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Our campus may be over 200 years old, but our educational approach isn’t. From pioneering first-year experience programs to giving students more flexible and accelerated paths to graduation, we’re creating a better student experience — in and out of the classroom. At the University of South Carolina, our leadership has No Limits.
Continued From Page B26

Governing boards are reacting to fiscal pressures, political heat from elected officials, and complaints from students and parents struggling to afford a college degree, says David A. Longanecker, president of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. “In my career, I’ve never seen so much churn in the policy and practice of higher education,” says Mr. Longanecker, who has led the regional policy-advisory group for more than 17 years.

The challenges to shared governance reflect broader currents in the nation’s economic and political climates. In the 2001 fiscal year, the average state appropriation for higher education was nearly $9,000 per student — a high-water mark, according to figures from the State Higher Education Executive Officers. But two recessions over the next 15 years led to widespread state budget cuts for higher education during a period when college enrollments were rapidly rising. As a result, state appropriations per student have decreased by more than 25 percent over that time, as a whole, while tuition has risen to fill the gap.

Meanwhile, in 2010, as the nation was still in the throes of the worst economic downturn since the Depression, voters elected a wave of Republican lawmakers into state legislatures and governors’ seats across the country. The election results, which gave the GOP control of more state legislative seats than at any time since 1928, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, have had major implications for higher education.

While state budget cuts have been a bipartisan issue, several Republican governors and state legislators have expressed a dim view of academe, and, in particular, the role and work of faculty members. Such views have led to direct attempts to weaken the faculty role in some states. In Wisconsin, lawmakers have eliminated collective bargaining for state employees and, more recently, removed provisions protecting shared governance and tenure from state law.

In other states, challenges to shared governance have also come from governing boards that were appointed by Republican lawmakers. The Iowa Board of Regents this year appointed J. Bruce Harreld, a former vice president at IBM and part-time instructor at Harvard University, as president of the University of Iowa, despite overwhelming opposition from the faculty.

Faculty members objected to Mr. Harreld’s lack of experience in higher education. But there was more outrage over revelations that the board’s chairman had engineered the appointment by arranging secret meetings with a majority of the regents before they made their selection.

Helping to choose the president is a key role of faculty members in shared governance, says William G. Bowen, a former president of Princeton University and author of several books on higher-education administration and governance. “I don’t think you can make a really wise decision about a potential president without understanding how the faculty view the person,” he says. “I don’t think a person has a good chance of succeeding as a leader without faculty support.”

The forces undermining shared governance go beyond partisan politics, however, and can also include pressures within academe.

“I wouldn’t simply blame politics,” says Henry F. Reichman, chairman of the American Association of University Professors’ Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure and a professor emeritus of history at California State University-East Bay. “There is a bipartisan notion that education is in crisis, and that the people who are educators are at fault, and the ones who know nothing about education are the ones to fix it.”

He adds: “The model of governance is increasingly a top-down, corporate-style CEO with dictatorial powers — a model that has shown itself to have disastrous consequences.”
Public and private colleges alike are also under pressure from wealthy donors to weaken shared governance, says Hans-Joerg Tiede, associate secretary of the AAUP’s Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance. One example is when donors want a role in appointing faculty members to academic centers that they help pay for. Some financially strapped colleges may be willing to make concessions, he says.

“That’s clearly a strike against shared governance,” he says, “because faculty appointments should be vetted by faculty and not donors.”

A 2008 agreement between the Charles G. Koch Foundation and Florida State University, for example, required that any faculty members hired for a program supporting the study of “political economy and free enterprise” be vetted by an advisory committee appointed by the foundation. A review of that agreement, by an independent faculty group, found that the economics department did not actually follow that provision.

In some cases, governing-board members simply have little understanding of the role of shared governance, says William G. Tierney, co-director of the Pul-}

lians Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California. For people who don’t understand the culture of higher education, he says, “tenure and shared governance seem like a strange way to run an organization.”

He and others say it’s time for shared governance to change with the times and, in particular, for faculty members to play a role in a variety of issues, like those that have arisen as financial pressures and public expectations have increased. “I would like faculty to deal with things like pension reform,” Mr. Tierney says. “There are very few answers coming from faculty other than ‘don’t touch it.’ The issues of diversity that have exploded over the past few months — where were the boards and faculty on this?”

The information age, along with the push for more Americans to earn some form of college credential, has democratized higher education, says Mr. Longanecker. That means there will be a wider variety of voices influencing it — including voices that focus more on success through accountability rather than prestige and selectivity.

Higher education is being forced to change, he says, “and we’re a little slow as an industry to respond.”

Shared Governance Under Attack

- Faculty members worry that governing boards are bypassing longtime principles of shared governance by making more leadership and policy decisions unilaterally.
- Governing boards are reacting to fiscal pressures, political heat from elected officials, and complaints from students and parents struggling to afford a college degree.
- Wealthy donors may also be undermining shared governance by seeking to control faculty appointments to academic centers that they support financially.
The Outsourced College

Vendors provide more than just dining halls and parking lots now

By SCOTT CARLSON

HERE was a time when colleges did almost everything themselves, much like the monasteries after which they were modeled. But that day is long gone. Today colleges are entwined with for-profit companies that provide a range of campus services (and pack the vendor halls of major higher-education conferences). Many companies prefer to call their transactions “partnerships,” but others who work in higher education give them a name that carries some baggage: outsourcing.

It has long been the norm for colleges to outsource services in their facilities departments, payroll offices, cafeterias, and retail stores. But in the past few years, for-profit companies have increasingly been tapped to carry out core college functions, including student services like advising, and even instruction.

Kevin Kruger, president of the student-affairs group Naspa, sees more colleges farming out mental-health counseling, assessments and surveys for accreditation reviews, and even their engagement with students over social media. “The risk is that you lose control of the mission, approach, values, and the quality of service,” he says. “There can be anxieties about the for-profit motive driving the service.”

At the same time, he adds, “no university in this country survives without outsourcing. No one does everything themselves. It’s impossible.”
Outsourcing started decades ago, when colleges contracted with companies that took over dining-hall services and campus bookstores. For years, any activity outside a college’s core mission — teaching and advising students — has been a candidate for outsourcing, says Bob Shea, a senior fellow in finance and campus management at the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

Some recent deals with private companies have been huge: Ohio State University leased all its parking facilities to an Australian firm for the next 50 years and got $483 million out of the deal. The Texas A&M University system struck a deal with Compass Group USA to let the company handle all of its landscaping, maintenance, custodial, and dining services, generating $760-million in savings and revenue for the system over 10 years. The University System of Georgia struck a $517-million deal with Corvias Campus Living to build and manage three million square feet in residence halls on nine campuses. Mr. Shea calls an agreement of that size, cutting across multiple campuses, “innovative” and unprecedented.

“The rationale behind most outsourcing goes like this: Colleges are good at education but not necessarily good at all the services that go along with running a campus. By hiring companies that specialize in those various services, they might save money. (Whether colleges actually see those savings depends on how well they negotiate their contracts, Mr. Shea says.)”

Richard DeCapua, associate dean of students at Boston College, notes an ever-increasing demand for student services at colleges, even as budgets get tighter. And institutions might feel more pressure to contract out additional services in the future. “I get emails all the time from companies that are saying, ‘We can do this for you, or we can come in and show you how,’” says Mr. DeCapua, who studied outsourcing for his doctoral degree. Large public universities generally outsource more services, he says, because the scale of those institutions makes outsourcing deals more financially viable for both the institution and the company.

Many companies bring money to the table. A company called 2U, for example, helps universities get hybrid-online programs up and running, even providing all of the initial investment. It films lectures, digitizes course materials, and sets up the online platform that provides students access to the course. Employees of 2U find settings where students worldwide can perform clinical or fieldwork — for example, hospitals where students at Georgetown University’s online midwifery program can deliver babies. Over 10 to 15 years, 2U gets a cut of the revenue generated by the program.

“There are parallels between what 2U does and what, for example, private developers of campus housing do: Both spend money to set up infrastructure for an essential component of the college experience, and both make a profit. But unlike many housing developers, Chip Paucek, 2U’s co-founder and CEO, bristles at describing his company’s services as “outsourcing,” calling the word “pejorative.”

“Pay attention to any presidential campaign, and the notion of outsourcing immediately becomes sort of a hostile term,” he says. “One of the reasons that we don’t love that word is that it somehow implies that the school has just turned it over to us.” In fact, he says, all the key academic decisions and content come from the colleges and their faculty members. Students value the universities’ brand, not 2U’s infrastructure. “People are not attending our schools for operational efficiency, but for great faculty, great instruction, and networks,” Mr. Paucek says. “I am very careful that our agreements don’t get close to that line.”

In other cases, however, companies have had a more active role in creating and even teaching college courses.
Outsourcing deals, particularly those that involve campus facilities, are getting bigger and broader. But commercial companies are increasingly moving into traditional academic roles.

Whether colleges save money through outsourcing depends on the details of the agreements and the know-how of college negotiators.

Outsourcing might not be for every college. Experts say outsourcing deals are most financially viable at large institutions because of their scale.

HotChalk: the Starbucks Experience in Online Education

HotChalk, an education-technology company founded in 2004, started out working in the public schools, providing tools to allow teachers to share lesson plans, homework assignments, and grades. Joe Ross, a senior vice president and chief strategy officer at HotChalk, says the company soon noticed that for-profit online universities had extensive advertising campaigns aimed at recruiting teachers for their programs. HotChalk’s executives saw a business opportunity: helping well-known brick-and-mortar institutions put their programs online to compete with those for-profit colleges.

That business model has turned out to be viable — and attractive to investors. Bertelsmann SE & Co., the German media corporation, invested $230 million in HotChalk in November as part of an effort to get a bigger piece of the education market.

HotChalk’s role is similar to that of 2U and other companies in the education-technology sector: Colleges bring the professors and the various academic programs, while HotChalk brings the technology to get those programs online and to connect students to one another. Mr. Ross says those online degree programs should be designed to deliver a pleasant and consistent customer experience — the sort of ethic that drives the big brands of Silicon Valley and the West Coast, like Starbucks or Apple. HotChalk’s pitch to colleges, he says, is selling that experience.

“When you see a Starbucks logo, you get a certain kind of feeling, and when you walk into a Starbucks, they give you a coffee that tastes exactly as it should,” he says. “Universities are really good at the coffee, but not necessarily good at everything else.”

But HotChalk’s methods differ from those of companies that use their own software, Mr. Ross adds. The company collaborates with other companies to build specialized software fitting what an institution wants.

For example, New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development just announced that it would use HotChalk to create an online master’s-degree program in teacher education.

HotChalk, in turn, is using a company called Torsh to build a feature that will allow professors at NYU to record, annotate, and share video of their students teaching in classrooms across the country. A student-teach-er sets up a phone or iPad on a tripod, and the video is beamed back to NYU, where professors can analyze the student’s teaching style and body language.

Ted Magder, vice dean for academic affairs at the Steinhardt school, says NYU hired HotChalk to build the online program because the university did not have the people or expertise to set up the program quickly, and because it needed help in marketing the new program.

“We realized that we didn’t have the capacity internally to properly spread the word,” he says. HotChalk has set up about 30 such programs, but NYU is the only institution that has announced its relationship with the company. (In a recent op-ed essay for Huffington Post, Alan Singer, a professor of education and a charter-school advocate and senior adviser to the company.)

The company won’t reveal its other clients, except to say it works with “more than six and less than a dozen,” Mr. Ross says.

“Because we are not a public company, and we are not subject to reminding Wall Street how well we are doing every quarter — thank goodness — we can be discreet on behalf of our universities in a way that a public company can’t,” he says.

“We let our universities talk about us rather than talk about them.”

— SCOTT CARLSON
ALL ROADS LEAD TO LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Los Angeles is the world’s capital of creativity and its diversity of thought, culture, religion and language all interconnect at LMU. Our Silicon Beach location is where tomorrow’s innovation thrives and world-changing ideas are formed. Our Jesuit education offers a rigorous intellectual experience to students seeking lives of meaning and purpose. Explore over 100 academic programs and discover your global imagination at www.lmu.edu.
CORPORATE influence over science tends to be subtle. Just as politicians who solicit donations from Wall Street banks deny allegiance to their backers, scientists insist that the money they accept from industry does not alter their scholarly conclusions. Surely no university researcher would ever admit being in cahoots with a company.

Not usually, anyway. In November, the Associated Press obtained emails sent by James O. Hill, a professor of pediatrics and medicine at the University of Colorado at Denver and director of the university’s Center for Human Nutrition, to executives at the Coca-Cola Company. In addition to his position at Colorado, Mr. Hill is (or, rather, was) president of the Global Energy Balance Network, a nonprofit created to “connect and engage multi-disciplinary scientists and other experts around the globe dedicated to applying and advancing the science of energy balance to achieve healthier living.” By emphasizing so-called energy balance, GEBN sought to shift the blame for obesity from sugary drinks to lack of exercise.

The group was bankrolled in part by Coca-Cola, a relationship that was disclosed in the website’s fine print. Suspicions were raised, first in The New York Times, regarding the soda-friendly public statements made by scientists affiliated with the group, but Mr. Hill’s emails really pulled back the curtain. In one email, he wrote to a Coke executive that “I want to help your company avoid the image of being a problem in people’s lives and back to being a company that brings important and fun things to them.” Coming from a marketing executive, such a bland assertion would be unremarkable. Coming from one of the nation’s leading obesity researchers, it seemed, at the very least, unseemly.
Ms. Goffman said she had the question of how much influence corporate funders have over science and that transparency about funding is important, but it’s no panacea.

While the problem is particularly acute in nutrition science, other fields face their own questions. Other worries include scientists who stack the deck to make certain dubious results appear significant, several cases of high-profile fakery, and numerous studies that cannot be replicated.

The Coke scandal is likely to shine a brighter spotlight on how private money affects what goes on in laboratories.

POST-SCANDAL. The Global Energy Balance Network was shuttered and the University of Colorado at Denver returned a $1-million grant from the company. Coke scrambled to save face. Since then, Mr. Hill has remained mostly mum. While he turned down an interview request, he did note that none of the $550,000 that Coke had donated to the University of Colorado Foundation since 2010 went to him personally (though since 2012, he acknowledged, Coke has paid him $4,000 in speaking fees).

So was this merely an isolated case of a corporate relationship that grew too cozy?

Far from it, according to Marion Nestle, a professor of nutrition and food studies at New York University who writes the watchdog blog Food Politics, she thinks corporate influence over nutrition research is so pervasive, and so widely accepted, that it endangers the credibility of her field.

“They’re funded by nuts and avocado and pork and pears and plums and pomegranates — anything you can think of,” Ms. Nestle says. To pluck one example, a study published last year touted the “unique health benefits of pears” and urgently called for more peer-focused research. A footnote revealed that the authors had “received a grant from USA Pears in the past.”

The funding source should give readers, and eaters, pause. Often, according to Ms. Nestle, studies like this ask questions that have almost no relevance to human health, but have a great deal of relevance to marketing. That doesn’t mean researchers are necessarily conspiring with industry to concoct bogus research. “Everybody who takes industry funding believes that it has no effect on the design, conduct, and interpretation of their research,” she says. Yet reams of research on how drug companies influence doctors show that even tiny freebies (free pens, anyone?) can create unconscious bias.

While nutrition studies have found itself in the cross hairs recently, other fields are not immune. The sway of big oil and big tobacco over scientific research is by now well documented.

A recent investigation by an advocacy group called Campaign for Accountability found that so-called payday-lending companies, often accused of trapping low-income customers in cycles of debt, had financed research concluding that — surprise! — short-term, high-interest loans weren’t so bad after all.

So what’s the solution? Transparency, certainly. But that’s no panacea: The now-defunct Global Energy Balance Network disclosed its funding sources, just not its apparent deference to industry. There’s discussion among nutrition researchers of creating a firewall between funding sources and scientists to prevent bias. But right now it’s just talk. Says Ms. Nestle: “Every society, research group, and university department of nutrition research is scrambling to find ways that it can take industry money and not have it bite them.”

Doubts About Research Make Headlines

Along with the Coca-Cola funding scandal, several other cases of alleged impropriety have put research credibility in the spotlight. Here are a few high-profile examples from the past year:

- Concerns were raised about the truthfulness of the sociologist Alice Gottfman’s notable book, On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City. Ms. Gottfman said she had destroyed her field notes in order to protect the anonymity of her subjects, making it difficult — if not impossible — to fact-check her statements, including the claim that she had witnessed a murder. Her case prompted a discussion about whether field notes and other supporting evidence should be preserved.

- Michael La Cour’s well-publicized study on shifting attitudes toward gay marriage earned the UCLA political science graduate student a job offer from Princeton University. The key finding was that a brief, face-to-face conversation could turn an opponent of gay marriage into a supporter. But an analysis of his data showed that it had almost certainly been fabricated, and the grants he claimed to have received didn’t exist. Mr. La Cour’s evasive defense of his work and his methodology did little to mollify skeptics. In the end, the study was retracted, and Princeton rescinded the job offer.

- How much of what’s published in peer-reviewed psychology journals can be replicated? That’s what the organizers of the Reproducibility Project set out to discover, attempting to replicate findings in 100 studies from three top psychology journals. The results were not encouraging: Only 39 percent of the studies passed the test. The project, led by Brian Nosek, executive director of the Center for Open Science, brought together more than 270 researchers who attempted to mirror the methods of the original researchers. They double-checked the science by painstakingly re-creating it.

TAKEAWAY

Research Credibility in the Spotlight

- The question of how much influence corporate funders have over science is often fraught. A recent scandal involving an obesity researcher’s affiliation with a group bankrolled in part by Coca-Cola brought the issue into the spotlight.

- Transparency about funding is important, but it’s no panacea.

- While the problem is particularly acute in nutrition science, other fields face their own questions.

- Other worries include scientists who stack the deck to make certain dubious results appear significant, several cases of high-profile fakery, and numerous studies that cannot be replicated.
Who got the job? What really happens in the academic job market?

Navigating the world of academic hiring can be overwhelming. Vitae’s new data-driven, interactive tool, JobTracker, is here to help with your academic career.

Discover where the jobs are and which fields are hiring.

Browse through thousands of tenure-track faculty positions spanning 11 disciplines and find data about each opening. As for candidates who land jobs, JobTracker reports on the trajectory of their employment success.

Learn more about Vitae’s JobTracker.

For a fact-based overview of the academic job market, visit:

JobTracker.ChronicleVitae.com

A service of The Chronicle of Higher Education
The New Transcript

More information and a digital format can empower the “quantified student”

By JEFFREY R. YOUNG

COLLEGE transcripts can seem pretty bare-bones, even cryptic: Typically they’re limited to a list of courses taken and grades earned, with little detail on what the courses involved and no sign of what else the students did during their time on campus.

But more and more colleges are giving their staid transcripts a makeover. They’re using them as a place to list “learning outcomes” of courses and to log how many hours students spent on extracurricular activities and internships, and they’re jazzing up the presentation with pie charts and infographics.

Those may sound like cosmetic changes, but making them requires soul-searching by college officials about what counts as meaningful learning. And the changes could have big consequences. Transcripts embody the cultural currency of a college. They’re a ticket that can grant admission to jobs and graduate schools, and, by extension, a more prosperous and fulfilling life. With the right upgrades, proponents believe, a New Transcript could help graduates better convey to employers their qualifications, including soft skills like communication and teamwork. Plus, it’s a chance for colleges to better demonstrate their worth to the growing chorus of those questioning the value of a degree.

Elon University is one institution at the forefront of the trend. In addition to its standard transcripts, it creates an “Experiences Transcript” for each student that includes activities in five areas — leadership, service, internship, study abroad, and research. Various campus organizations report student activities to the registrar or other designated campus offices, so that they show up in the digital record that’s certified by the university. For instance, fraternities submit their leadership rosters, companies that host interns submit a record of the number of hours that students worked, and professors report substantial student research projects.

“One thing the students say more than anything is, Wow, I had no idea I was doing all this at Elon,” says Rodney Parks, the registrar. “We’re reminding them of all of those experiences that they had.”

Continued on Following Page
Transcripts That Pack a Punch

- Colleges are reconsidering what transcripts should include and what they should look like so as to provide a richer sense of what students have learned.
- By listing extracurricular activities and internships, colleges believe they can show employers evidence of “soft skills.”
- Some professors worry that emphasizing more-granular achievements will prompt students to focus on piling up points rather than on deeper learning.

Some academics worry that a Fitbit approach to educational data represents a dystopia in which colleges view career readiness, rather than the expansion of students’ minds, as their main function. “This is an incredibly depressing view of education,” Jason B. Jones, an editor of ProfHacker, argued in a recent blog post on The Chronicle’s site.

And not everyone thinks the upgraded transcripts and portfolios will catch on with employers. “Employers don’t want to take time to go through your portfolio — they just don’t,” says Anthony P. Carnevale, director of Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce. He argues that most companies want to make their hiring processes as efficient as possible, and that they are looking for simple, stark signals — like whether a person graduated, and from where — to decide whom to spend more time interviewing. “They’re not looking at transcripts now; why are they going to look at more later?” he adds.

He does think that the New Transcripts — which are digital rather than in paper form — will lead to revolutionary changes for colleges, because of their potential as an accountability metric for higher education. By making it possible to look at aggregate transcript data, digitization allows colleges to tell which majors most consistently lead to jobs, and at what pay scale.

And if such information is shared with consumers, as some state and federal efforts hope to require, that will provide a powerful new way to compare colleges. “If you look at higher education as an investment,” Mr. Carnevale says, “you want to know what the return is going to be.”

O ther institutions looking to bolster their transcripts are adding portfolios to give employers a more detailed look at student projects. While such portfolios are not new, colleges are trying them to help bridge the perceived divide between what colleges teach and what employers want.

The move to improve transcripts is part of a broader push toward what some are calling the “quantified student,” meaning that students begin to see the New Transcript as part of a record that helps them better understand their own educational development and communicate it to employers.

The buzzword alludes to the so-called quantified-self movement, epitomized by fitness trackers and apps that allow people to analyze data on their own physical activity and other habits (such as the number of footsteps walked, calories consumed, and hours slept).

“Quantified Students will be able to map current skill sets against the requirements of target careers, evaluate the gap, and then select the educational program or path that gets them to their destination quickly and cost effective- ly,” wrote Adam Markowitz, chief executive of Portfolio, which sells a student-portfolio tool, and Ryan Craig, an investor in the company, in an article in Forbes magazine this year.

As colleges experiment with new approaches to transcripts, and employers demand more evidence of so-called soft skills, a new credential ecosystem is emerging. That was a topic at a recent daylong summit called Innovating Academic Credentials, held in Washington in February. During the session, moderated by this Chronicle reporter, a panel of university leaders and industry experts described how the roles of colleges, employers, and students are changing as credentials become digital and more granular.

Here are three takeaways from the panel, lightly edited and condensed for clarity.

Alan Houston, director of academic strategic initiatives at the University of California at San Diego:

“We provide students with an electronic portfolio. We work with either LinkedIn or Portfolium. Students can take the experiences they have in classrooms and the things that they have certified in their co-curricular record, and then present them online. Part of our role is to teach students to curate their own record. We have modules and instructional materials to help them understand how you put together a vibrant portfolio that can then be taken to an employer or a graduate program or any one of a number of organizations to advance your career.”

Scott Bierman, associate vice president for student affairs at Bellevue University:

“We’re here more on the aspirational side. We feel that the credentials that we’re currently using — and I say ‘we’ as in all postsec- ondary education — let’s just say we could do a better job of communi- cating learning. Students come to a postsecondary education institu- tion to learn, but mostly to advance their careers. I would say the vast majority of postsecondary institutions do a poor job of really commu- nicating what students learned. Our stance is that whatever we can do to help communicate and tell the stu- dents’ stories, at Bellevue Universi- ty or through their lifetime, is what we need to be doing. We’re curators of the information, not owners, and I think that’s a different perspec- tive.”

Matt Sigelman, CEO of Burning Glass Technologies, a labor-mar- ket analytics firm:

“A credential represents a signal. It’s a signal that we are presenting to the market, to employers, that vouches for the skills acquired over the course of a student’s education. It’s important as well to realize that that signal is a bidirectional one: This is a real conversation across the job market between supply and demand in a lot of ways. We think of our work at Burning Glass as being able to distill that signal so that those who work in higher edu- cation can broadcast more effectively. Employers are actually sending signals about what they’re looking for, but we have no common language in the job market for aggregating that up. Our job at Burning Glass is to translate those millions of signals a day into a common language, so you can say, What are the skills that employers are asking for? What certifications seem to have currency and which ones don’t, so how can we then respond to that?”

— JEFFREY B. YOUNG

Continued From Previous Page

The effort began back in 1994, in the student-affairs office, but few students requested the Experiences Transcript until the registrar’s office recently took it over and made it an option with any standard transcript request. Now the university is working to improve the document’s appearance, turning it into what Mr. Parks calls a “visual transcript,” with a timeline of a student’s major extracurricular activities, a map highlighting her study abroad, graphs of hours she spent doing volunteer and service work, and the logos of companies where she had internships.

Students can also share these new transcripts digitally, by dropping them into LinkedIn profiles or personal websites.

The visual-transcript project is supported by a grant from the Lumina Foundation as part of a $1.3-million effort to modernize credentials. The university plans to release a tool to help more colleges adopt the idea.
ROLANDO R. GARZA’S job stands at the convergence of several forces transforming higher education.

As an instructional designer at Texas A&M University at Kingsville, Mr. Garza works with hundreds of faculty members, helping them translate their in-person courses to be offered online.

The job requires technical ability, design skills, pedagogical knowledge, and a deft interpersonal touch. “We’re on the same team,” he often reassures academics when he begins working with them. “I’m here to tell you how to teach using distance learning.”

Jobs like Mr. Garza’s are increasingly important and sought-after in academe. Membership in the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, which is composed mostly of instructional designers at the post-secondary level, has grown by 50 percent over the past decade, to more than 2,400. The number of instructional designers attending conferences on teaching online, such as Educause’s Learning Initiative, has grown substantially in recent years as well, as have job postings.

The push for instructional designers reflects a number of broad trends: the growing pressure on colleges to improve teaching and substantiate learning; the maturation of online courses; and the increasingly sophisticated technology available to reach and engage students and analyze their behavior. But that growth has occurred largely under the radar, in part because the job is as multifaceted as it is hard to define.

“We’re usually behind the scenes, and no one knows what we do,” says Penny Ralston-Berg, a senior instructional designer for Pennsylvania State University’s World Campus, an established provider of online learning. Some instructional designers focus on graphics, while others are technical experts. Increasingly, many are expected to be conversant with learning theory and pedagogy.

However it is defined, at its core the job has the same goal. “Proving that objectives are met: That’s what designers do,” says Ms. Ralston-Berg, who is also chair of the Instructional Designers Association. Only three years old, the association already has nearly 600 members.

Continued on Following Page
The roots of instructional design date to World War II, when the armed forces needed to provide technical training to large numbers of people efficiently. Companies now use instructional design to develop training materials for their employees.

Colleges have long relied on instructional design for their distance-learning and extension programs, which tend to appeal to nontraditional students with family and work obligations. As the proportion of those students increases, online learning has grown more popular, and with it the need for instructional design.

The share of students taking online courses has nearly tripled, from less than 10 percent in 2002 to 28 percent in 2014, according to the Babson Survey Research Group. During a similar period, Babson also found, the percentage of academic leaders who see online learning as critical to their institution’s long-term strategy went from about half to nearly two-thirds.

Meanwhile, technology has embedded itself in the everyday classroom, in hybrid courses and through the learning-management systems used in face-to-face settings. The lines between technology and teaching have blurred, says Malcolm Brown, director of Educational Technology and Teaching at the University of Florida. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently reported that only about a third of chief academic officers said most of their faculty members effectively used digital learning tools.

That sentiment may reflect deeper skepticism in academe. Many academic leaders and faculty members see online courses and through the everyday classroom, in hybrid courses and through the learning-management systems used in face-to-face settings. The lines between technology and teaching have blurred, says Malcolm Brown, director of Educational Technology and Teaching at the University of Florida. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently reported that only about a third of chief academic officers said most of their faculty members effectively used digital learning tools.

That sentiment may reflect deeper skepticism in academe. Many academic leaders and faculty members see online courses as inferior to face-to-face courses. It isn’t unusual for instructional designers to have to allay anxiety and suspicions among instructors. The designers’ job is also still being professionalized. A recent analysis by Mr. Ritzhaupt found that 70 percent of job ads for instructional designers didn’t require a graduate degree.

Instructional design also has a way of playing into larger concerns about shifts in educational practice. Many theories of instructional design are based in systems thinking, a form of analysis that came out of engineering and focuses on the interplay of components within a larger environment. Instructional design can be seen as a force for standardizing education and its processes, placing efficiency above the individual relationships that are at the heart of teaching and learning.

“The learner becomes a generic factor in the planning of mechanized, scheduled knowledge brokering,” Sean Michael Morris wrote recently on the website Digital Pedagogy Lab. “The instructor, through design, becomes nothing more than a recording, a megaphone, her only nuance the occasional typo.”

Melody J. Buckner, director of the Office of Digital Learning at the University of Arizona, sympathizes with that kind of critique. She worries when systems become more important than the people they are supposed to help. As the doctorate-holding leader of a 12-person office (with six instructional designers, a pedagogical expert, graphic designers, videographers, project managers, and a quality-assurance coordinator), she and her team reflect the growing profile and scale of this work.

Although her staff has technical expertise, the real commodity it offers is helping faculty members use technology in a way that makes for a better educational experience, Ms. Buckner says.

It is a laborious process that begins when she and her colleagues meet with faculty members. The first thing she does is ask instructors how they approach their in-person courses. What do they feel most comfortable doing in their classroom? How can she help them make the shift to teaching online?

Her team follows each instructor’s course week by week, distilling their goals and reimagining them in online form. Teaching online may be a different mode than teaching in person, she says, but the underlying goals are the same.

Online courses have the potential to be particularly effective if carried out well, Ms. Buckner says. “You can make online just as rich and engaging, and in some cases more, because online is more student-centered than face-to-face teaching.”

The answer doesn’t come easily to many instructors. “Many faculty are uncomfortable and don’t know best practices in online education,” says Albert D. Ritzhaupt, an associate professor of educational technology at the University of Florida. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently reported that only about a third of chief academic officers said most of their faculty members effectively used digital learning tools.

UNLIKE many instructors, Melody J. Buckner, director of the Office of Digital Learning at the University of Arizona, sympathizes with that kind of critique. She worries when systems become more important than the people they are supposed to help. As the doctorate-holding leader of a 12-person office (with six instructional designers, a pedagogical expert, graphic designers, videographers, project managers, and a quality-assurance coordinator), she and her team reflect the growing profile and scale of this work.

Although her staff has technical expertise, the real commodity it offers is helping faculty members use technology in a way that makes for a better educational experience, Ms. Buckner says.

It is a laborious process that begins when she and her colleagues meet with faculty members. The first thing she does is ask instructors how they approach their in-person courses. What do they feel most comfortable doing in their classroom? How can she help them make the shift to teaching online?

Her team follows each instructor’s course week by week, distilling their goals and reimagining them in online form. Teaching online may be a different mode than teaching in person, she says, but the underlying goals are the same.

Online courses have the potential to be particularly effective if carried out well, Ms. Buckner says. “You can make online just as rich and engaging, and in some cases more, because online is more student-centered than face-to-face teaching.”

Meanwhile, technology has embedded itself in the everyday classroom, in hybrid courses and through the learning-management systems used in face-to-face settings. The lines between technology and teaching have blurred, says Malcolm Brown, director of Educational Technology and Teaching at the University of Florida. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently reported that only about a third of chief academic officers said most of their faculty members effectively used digital learning tools.

The share of students taking online courses has nearly tripled, from less than 10 percent in 2002 to 28 percent in 2014, according to the Babson Survey Research Group. During a similar period, Babson also found, the percentage of academic leaders who see online learning as critical to their institution’s long-term strategy went from about half to nearly two-thirds.

The answer doesn’t come easily to many instructors. “Many faculty are uncomfortable and don’t know best practices in online education,” says Albert D. Ritzhaupt, an associate professor of educational technology at the University of Florida. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently reported that only about a third of chief academic officers said most of their faculty members effectively used digital learning tools.

That sentiment may reflect deeper skepticism in academe. Many academic leaders and faculty members see online courses as inferior to face-to-face courses. It isn’t unusual for instructional designers to have to allay anxiety and suspicions among instructors. The designers’ job is also still being professionalized. A recent analysis by Mr. Ritzhaupt found that 70 percent of job ads for instructional designers didn’t require a graduate degree.

Instructional design also has a way of playing into larger concerns about shifts in educational practice. Many theories of instructional design are based in systems thinking, a form of analysis that came out of engineering and focuses on the interplay of components within a larger environment. Instructional design can be seen as a force for standardizing education and its processes, placing efficiency above the individual relationships that are at the heart of teaching and learning.

“The learner becomes a generic factor in the planning of mechanized, scheduled knowledge brokering,” Sean Michael Morris wrote recently on the website Digital Pedagogy Lab. “The instructor, through design, becomes nothing more than a recording, a megaphone, her only nuance the occasional typo.” Melody J. Buckner, director of the Office of Digital Learning at the University of Arizona, sympathizes with that kind of critique. She worries when systems become more important than the people they are supposed to help. As the doctorate-holding leader of a 12-person office (with six instructional designers, a pedagogical expert, graphic designers, videographers, project managers, and a quality-assurance coordinator), she and her team reflect the growing profile and scale of this work.

Although her staff has technical expertise, the real commodity it offers is helping faculty members use technology in a way that makes for a better educational experience, Ms. Buckner says.

It is a laborious process that begins when she and her colleagues meet with faculty members. The first thing she does is ask instructors how they approach their in-person courses. What do they feel most comfortable doing in their classroom? How can she help them make the shift to teaching online?

Her team follows each instructor’s course week by week, distilling their goals and reimagining them in online form. Teaching online may be a different mode than teaching in person, she says, but the underlying goals are the same.

Online courses have the potential to be particularly effective if carried out well, Ms. Buckner says. “You can make online just as rich and engaging, and in some cases more, because online is more student-centered than face-to-face teaching.”

Succeeding by Design

As colleges put more resources into online courses, more students are taking them — and the ranks of instructional designers are growing.

The roots of instructional design date to World War II, when the armed forces needed to provide technical training to large numbers of people efficiently. Companies now use instructional design to develop training materials for their employees.

Colleges have long relied on instructional design for their distance-learning and extension programs, which tend to appeal to nontraditional students with family and work obligations. As the proportion of those students increases, online learning has grown more popular, and with it the need for instructional design.

The share of students taking online courses has nearly tripled, from less than 10 percent in 2002 to 28 percent in 2014, according to the Babson Survey Research Group. During a similar period, Babson also found, the percentage of academic leaders who see online learning as critical to their institution’s long-term strategy went from about half to nearly two-thirds.

Meanwhile, technology has embedded itself in the everyday classroom, in hybrid courses and through the learning-management systems used in face-to-face settings. The lines between technology and teaching have blurred, says Malcolm Brown, director of Educational Technology and Teaching at the University of Florida. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently reported that only about a third of chief academic officers said most of their faculty members effectively used digital learning tools.

That sentiment may reflect deeper skepticism in academe. Many academic leaders and faculty members see online courses as inferior to face-to-face courses. It isn’t unusual for instructional designers to have to allay anxiety and suspicions among instructors. The designers’ job is also still being professionalized. A recent analysis by Mr. Ritzhaupt found that 70 percent of job ads for instructional designers didn’t require a graduate degree.

Instructional design also has a way of playing into larger concerns about shifts in educational practice. Many theories of instructional design are based in systems thinking, a form of analysis that came out of engineering and focuses on the interplay of components within a larger environment. Instructional design can be seen as a force for standardizing education and its processes, placing efficiency above the individual relationships that are at the heart of teaching and learning.

“The learner becomes a generic factor in the planning of mechanized, scheduled knowledge brokering,” Sean Michael Morris wrote recently on the website Digital Pedagogy Lab. “The instructor, through design, becomes nothing more than a recording, a megaphone, her only nuance the occasional typo.” Melody J. Buckner, director of the Office of Digital Learning at the University of Arizona, sympathizes with that kind of critique. She worries when systems become more important than the people they are supposed to help. As the doctorate-holding leader of a 12-person office (with six instructional designers, a pedagogical expert, graphic designers, videographers, project managers, and a quality-assurance coordinator), she and her team reflect the growing profile and scale of this work.

Although her staff has technical expertise, the real commodity it offers is helping faculty members use technology in a way that makes for a better educational experience, Ms. Buckner says.

It is a laborious process that begins when she and her colleagues meet with faculty members. The first thing she does is ask instructors how they approach their in-person courses. What do they feel most comfortable doing in their classroom? How can she help them make the shift to teaching online?

Her team follows each instructor’s course week by week, distilling their goals and reimagining them in online form. Teaching online may be a different mode than teaching in person, she says, but the underlying goals are the same.

Online courses have the potential to be particularly effective if carried out well, Ms. Buckner says. “You can make online just as rich and engaging, and in some cases more, because online is more student-centered than face-to-face teaching.”
THE D-WORD makes Robert A. Sevier cringe. He sees it everywhere, in college brochures and strategic plans. The word is “distinctive,” and he urges clients not to fall in love with it.

Mr. Sevier, senior vice president for strategy at Stamats Inc., a consulting firm, is all for academic programs that might differentiate one institution from another. Yet focusing on distinctiveness, he believes, can lead to a dangerous assumption: If a college cherishes an offering, everyone else will, too. “You can be really good at something,” he says, “but if people don’t want it, it’s not a competitive advantage.”

In short, distinctiveness that generates insufficient revenue is nothing to crow about. So it’s worth asking whom an institution’s strategies and messages are really serving. Only after getting over its “institutional centricity,” Mr. Sevier says, can a college determine how to meet the needs of prospective students.

Continued on Following Page
Make Marketing Work

- Perceptions matter. Find out what people think of your college, and listen to what they want.
- Not all students are alike. Consider their differences and tailor messages accordingly.
- The grass isn’t always greener. Before chasing new markets, make sure you’re getting the most out of existing ones.

In some corners of higher education, marketing still has a bad name. “Unfortunately, there’s a stigma that we’re shady people who cause bad things to happen,” says Rob Westervelt, executive vice president for enrollment and marketing at George Fox University, in Oregon.

When he came to the institution eight years ago, he recalls, a professor singled him out during a meeting, and said: “You’re a marketer, I can’t trust you.” So Mr. Westervelt asked him a question: “What happens if I say your program is awesome, and we should tell everyone on the planet about it?” The professor wanted to hear more.

Over the years, Mr. Westervelt says, many faculty and staff members have come to understand — and embrace — the idea that effective marketing is a necessity for the small Christian institution, which is heavily dependent on tuition. Since 2010 the university’s “Be Known” branding campaign, which promises personal attention to each and every student, has helped the campus frame its goals. “It’s a prescriptive vision,” he says. “It’s helped us tell our story.”

The university’s administrative structure affirms the importance of marketing. Previously, George Fox had one vice president for enrollment and another for marketing. The two divisions, which had different objectives, weren’t always on the same page.

Following a budget shortfall a few years back, George Fox combined the positions. Marrying those functions has helped the university define the terms of its success. “Everything is now measured by what the incoming class looks like — students and dollars,” he says. “Now, our customer isn’t the university — it’s the student. We think of our admissions people as marketers, and they think of themselves that way.”

Mr. Westervelt predicts that many more colleges will merge enrollment and marketing departments in hopes of enhancing recruitment. So, too, does Robert A. Sevier, senior vice president for strategy at Stamats Inc., a consulting firm, who’s seen the profile of senior-level marketing officials rise. More of them are part of presidential cabinets; more are overseeing enrollment and advancement. And more are working closely with the academic side of the house. “If your curriculum is your most important academic asset,” Mr. Sevier says, “then your chief curriculum officer is really your chief marketing officer.”

The notion that an admissions office is also a marketing office doesn’t sit well everywhere. At highly selective colleges especially, you’re likely to hear admissions officers shun the M-word, insisting that they’re “counselors” and not marketers.

That might not be a useful way for many colleges to think of recruitment, however. “If your admissions people are saying that,” says Bob Johnson, a Michigan-based marketing consultant who works with colleges, “your campus is really in trouble.”

— ERIC HOOVER

Marketing Finds Its Place on the Campus

Continued From Preceding Page

In an uncertain climate, that’s a difficult task. Although colleges define their marketing challenges in different ways, some prevalent trends suggest that a balanced strategy is important. Many colleges are pairing increasingly high-tech recruitment with old-fashioned outreach. They’re doubling down on traditional markets while targeting farther-away geographic areas more selectively than before. And they’re learning how to define themselves, in part, by soliciting others’ opinions.

Knowing how you’re perceived is important, say officials at Murray State University. Recently the Kentucky institution commissioned a survey of current and prospective students. The results stung. “The perception was that Murray State was really cheap,” says Fred Dietz, associate vice president for enrollment management. “But they did not see quality attached to that price tag.”

Murray State had long promoted its affordability. But it hadn’t done as well in describing its academic programs and student outcomes, Mr. Dietz says. Sure, officials had hoped for stronger incoming classes and better retention rates. “But we were kind of stagnant. We were expecting different results but kind of doing the same thing.”

After the survey, Murray State beefed up its admission requirements, bolstered scholarships for high-achieving students, created an honors college, and revamped recruitment materials to emphasize academic success. With a declining population of high-school graduates in its own backyard, it also hired an admissions officer to work from Louisville, and it stepped up outreach in Nashville and St. Louis.

Not all students are in the same circumstances, of course, so Murray State is also thinking harder about how subgroups differ. The admissions office now divides its applicant pool into four tiers, based on grades and test scores, and each group of applicants receives a different acceptance letter. (The best performers bear about the honors college and research opportunities, for instance, and those likely to need the most help get information about academic support.)

Raising standards can be risky. As of mid-January, Murray State had denied 400 applicants, compared with 70 at the same point last year. (It welcomed nearly 1,500 freshmen last fall.) How that might affect next fall’s enrollment remains to be seen. Yet Mr. Dietz is optimistic. The recent survey, he says, has sparked a campuswide conversation about quality: “It led us to hold off on any type of branding, and right now you don’t see a fancy tagline, because we’re taking the time to see where these changes take us.”

Sometimes a new branding campaign makes sense. Especially if it captures what’s already true about a campus, says Rob Westervelt, executive vice president for enrollment
Bob Johnson, a Michigan-based marketing consultant who works with colleges. After all, most students don’t travel very far from home.

Moreover, colleges often leave students “on the table,” he says, by not following up with them in a timely — or meaningful — fashion. When a prospective applicant flags her interest in a specific major, does she hear back from anyone in that department? When ACT/SAT takers report their scores to a college, an indication of interest, are they treated like just another prospect in the pool?

The answers to such questions matter. “You don’t go looking for a new gold mine,” Mr. Johnson says, “until you’re sure you’ve got all the gold out of the mine you’re in.”
Let’s **solve** the world’s most challenging problems.

The University of Central Florida’s Faculty Cluster Initiative fosters the development of talented, interdisciplinary teams focused on solving today’s toughest scientific and societal challenges through teaching and research. We’re hiring 33 new faculty members in the areas of cyber security, energy conversion, prosthetic interfaces, and sustainable energy systems to advance UCF’s areas of excellence and global impact.

[ucf.edu/research/clusters](ucf.edu/research/clusters)

UCF is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.
WE HELP THOSE WHO DO GOOD DO WELL.

Rediscover what makes us a different kind of financial partner at the new TIAA.org >