Preparing Professors for a More Digital World

INSIDE HIGHER ED | D2L

D2L

Build Better Learning Experiences.

A teacher's guide to Maximizing Resilience in a modern world.

Download Now

Introduction

Many critics of higher education tend to characterize faculty members as stuck in their ways, as impediments to innovation at their institutions rather than champions for modernization and improvement. That may stem from the fact that from a distance – which is where most such critics view the enterprise from – the image of instructors standing at the front of a classroom lecturing is still the dominant one.

Yet the reality is otherwise, as Steven Mintz writes in this collection: "Many of higher ed's most vaunted innovations started small and were the work of a small number of extraordinarily committed faculty visionaries," writes Mintz, a professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin and author of *Inside Higher Ed*'s Higher Ed Gamma blog.

The digital age has fully taken hold in our society, and higher education – while it lags other sectors of the economy such as retail and entertainment – has entered it, too. It was true before COVID-19 forced the entire enterprise to migrate off physical campuses, but the pandemic obliterated any doubts about where the academy was headed.

Digital innovation in higher education cannot occur without the faculty's support and participation; history is littered with examples of topdown initiatives that have failed without it. Yet college and university leaders and other proponents of technological and other innovation are increasingly realizing that they cannot reasonably expect instructors to add digital expertise to their repertoires without significant preparation, training and support.

The articles in this compilation explore the current landscape for digital innovation in higher education and the faculty role in enabling it. The news and opinion articles explore faculty and student perspectives on technology's role in learning, new initiatives aimed at strengthening faculty preparation for new modes of teaching, and advice for campus leaders about best practices.

We hope this collection offers guidance in your important work. As always, we welcome comments on this compilation and suggestions for future coverage.

–The Editors
editor@insidehighered.com

NEWS

Evolving Faculty Views on Teaching, Publishing and Technology

A new report took the temperature of thousands of U.S. faculty members. Among the findings: a high regard for conferences, even when delivered virtually; a rise in open educational resources; and a decrease in scholarly funding.

By Susan D'Agostino · Published July 14, 2022

Against the backdrop of an evolving public health crisis and altered political landscape in recent years, no one will be surprised that faculty members at American colleges and universities have changed some of their day-to-day tasks and views related to research, teaching and publishing. Many of these views are shared in a report published today by Ithaka S+R that last year took the temperature of 7,615 faculty members at four-year colleges and universities offering bachelor's degrees or higher.

A new report took the temperature of thousands of U.S. faculty members.
(Skynesher/Getty Images)

The pandemic put a dent in faculty members' ability to gather at conferences and workshops but not their enthusiasm for doing so. Two-thirds of faculty members rated such attendance as "highly important" for staying current on scholarly literature. In contrast, only about half of respondents deemed "regularly skimming table of contents alerts of key journals" as "highly important." The rise of virtual conferences and workshops during the pandemic made conference attendance easier and cheaper. This, the study authors suggest, accounts for the minimal decrease in their perceived value from the 2015 and 2018 surveys.

When submitting publication for research, faculty members worried less about journal impact factors in 2021 than in earlier years. Just under three-quarters (73 percent) rated impact factor as "highly important" in this recent report compared with 79 percent in 2018 and 81 percent in 2015. Impact factors are supposed to indicate the impact or quality of the research that a journal accepts for publication.

"I think we're all better than [overemphasizing impact factor]," said Ulrica Wilson, a math professor at Morehouse College. In promotion discussions, Wilson pushes back on an overreliance on journal impact factors. For her research, she considers whether the journal is the right fit and whether it reaches the audience she seeks—factors that align with the highest-rated priorities of the survey respondents.

"We have to be careful of judging where work lives and maybe just read the doggone article," Wilson said.

To be sure, journal impact factor has not disappeared as a consideration when faculty members decide where to publish research.

Evolving Faculty Views on Teaching, Publishing and Technology (cont.)

"Unfortunately, the incentive structure, especially for assistant professors, makes it hard to select journals based on elements such as whether the journal is paywalled, whether the readership extends to practitioners and whether the journal and its editorial board cover an inclusive range of perspectives," an assistant professor in political science who asked to remain anonymous told *Inside Higher Ed*. "Promotions often depend more simply on having publications in 'top' journals, a category that represents a fairly narrow set of field-specific, high-impact publications."

A majority of faculty members (84 percent) surveyed considered the library's ability to provide access to scholarly materials "highly important," according to the report—a statistic that is consistent with the 2015 and 2018 surveys. But in 2021, a majority of instructors (81 percent) also valued the library's role in providing students with access to technology and informal academic gathering spaces. (Questions about the latter two items were new in 2021, so the survey did not provide insight on how these views have evolved.)

A majority of faculty members (88 percent) are interested in lowering the cost of course materials for their students—a percentage that was consistent with earlier surveys. To achieve this goal, professors have increased their efforts to create and place educational content in the public domain. In 2021, just under half (41 percent) of faculty members used open textbooks, just over one-third (38 percent) used open video lectures and approximately one-quarter (26 percent) used open course materials—a noticeable increase across all categories from earlier Ithaka S+R surveys.

Tom Edgar, a math professor at Pacific Lutheran University, joined the open educational resources movement during the survey period. He had taught visual mathematical proofs in the past but found that static diagrams were not always effective in conveying concepts to his students. Then, during the lockdown days of the pandemic, after giving up on teaching himself the mandolin, he turned to animating visual mathematical proofs that he now shares on YouTube.

"Those of us who love mathematics," Edgar said, "we sort of want everyone to love mathematics the way that we do." He enjoys the creative outlet, is learning a programming language and has found that his creations foster engagement with others beyond his classroom.

Despite bright spots, faculty members have felt increasingly squeezed by a decrease in funding for their scholarly endeavors from public or government grant-making institutions such as the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 2021, (only) approximately one-third of faculty (32 percent) reported having received external funding, compared with half (50 percent) of faculty in 2015. ■

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/07/14/evolving-faculty-views-teaching-publishing-technology

D2L

Data Talks

Are you listening?

40%

of students in the US drop out of college each year.[i]

Being unable to balance school, jobs and personal lives is listed as a top reason for dropping out of college.[ii]

Learn how you can identify and support at-risk students before it's too late. Easily leverage powerful, built-in data and analytics tools in the state-of-the-art LMS chosen by today's leading institutions.

See how D2L Brightspace can help.
Visit **www.D2L.com/lets-talk** to learn more.

D2L.com

[i]https://www.thinkimpact.com/college-dropout-rates/
[ii]https://www.collegeatlas.org/college-dropout.html

Students' Opinions of Professors Lean Positive

Asked about professors' choices in instructional materials, fairness in grading and other factors, students rate professors highly. But there's still work to be done.

By Melissa Ezarik · Published May 26, 2022

"I've had some really incredible and engaging professors," wrote a Student Voice survey respondent attending a private university in New York. The next sentence of that comment, however, reflects just how individualized the education experience is, and how hard it is for students to give an overall rating of professors: "I've also had some really awful, racist/sexist/homophobic professors who didn't listen to any student feedback."

Still, when asked about the quality of current professors in six areas, the 2,000 undergraduates responding to the Student Voice survey, conducted in mid-April by *Inside Higher Ed* and College Pulse with support from Kaplan, largely gave high marks. That's especially true in terms of academic rigor, communicating course expectations, technology use and choice of instructional materials, which at least one in four students rated as excellent and between seven and eight out of 10 students rated as either excellent or good.

Students had slightly lower ratings of professors on engaging lectures/assignments and on relationship building, although one in five still say professors are excellent in these areas.

(Skynesher/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

Bonni Stachowiak, producer and host of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast and the dean of teaching and learning at Vanguard University, in California, says one of her most popular blog posts ever covers how not to be boring: "It's something a lot of people struggle with." She sees the problem as twofold, including both instructional materials and the actual teaching.

An Arizona public institution student would like to see better presentations: "Instructors create lectures that are too long, that overemphasize simple concepts, that underclarify complex concepts, and that make use of PowerPoint presentations [with] inconsistent indentation, bulleting, spelling and grammar."

A public university student in Massachusetts wrote, "Most teachers just give you information without engagement."

Professors who lead conversations in class and relate them back to course content often make a lasting impression. Lucia Reynolds, a sophomore at Texas Christian University, had that type of experience this past fall in the English course Gender, Culture and Representation, with Brandon Manning. "We would have an open conversation about pop culture from our perspective, and he'd relate something we brought up to something else that was part of the curriculum. That made the subject a lot more

interesting, and we wanted to engage more," she says. "The hope for me and other students is that the relationship building is intertwined with coursework."

Now, Reynolds finds herself hearing about news in pop culture and wondering what Professor Manning would say about it.

The Student Voice survey sought students' say on grading, tenure and choice of instructional materials. Highlights include that:

- Eighty-nine percent of students agree either strongly (44 percent) or somewhat (45 percent) that their professors grade fairly.
- The majority of students report their professors are choosing up-to-date (61 percent) and diverse (53 percent) instructional materials.
- Students are much more likely to have a positive opinion of tenure than a negative one, 57 percent compared to 18 percent—and the positive outlook jumps to 76 percent when "not sure" responses (one in four) are removed.

Students pick up on signs that their professors are—more than two years in to COVID-era teaching—stressed. Examples include having at least one professor who appears disorganized or has been late for more than one class session—or knowing of professors who resigned during the pandemic.

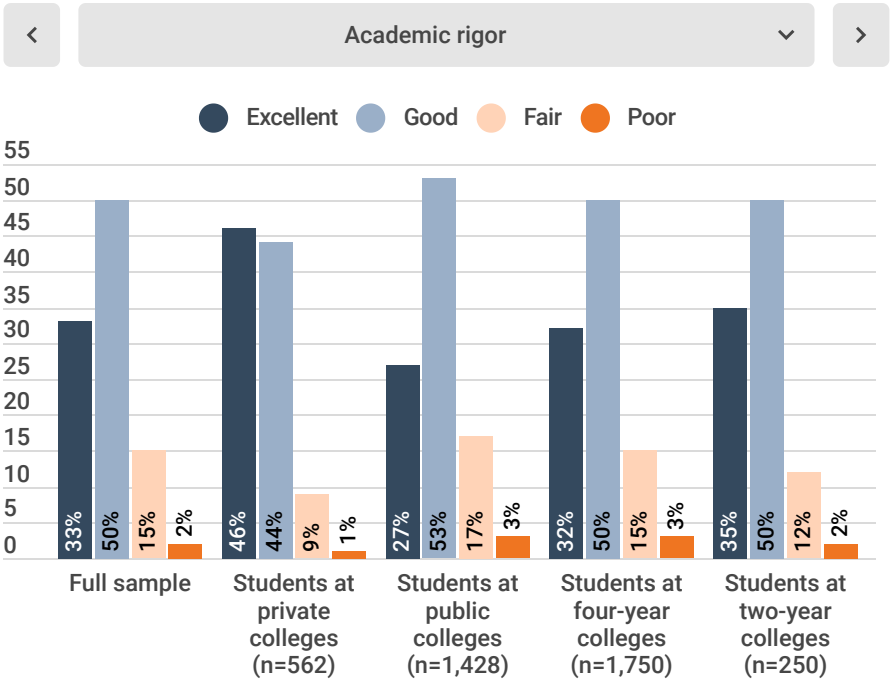
In addition, more than one-third of students have at least one professor teaching virtually when the intended format was in person. This situation is more common at public (36 percent) than at private (27 percent) colleges.

Regarding professor experiences, "COVID has given students more insight than they might have had before COVID," says Alexis Petri, co-director of University of Missouri at Kansas City's Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence and senior director of faculty support in the university provost's office. She cites early-pandemic observations in a survey of UMKC students such as, "I never knew what an adjunct was, and now I know it's someone who gets paid very little and doesn't have high-speed internet because the university doesn't give them high-speed internet."

On the positive side, students may notice professors who are more open now to flexibility in teaching. As one Student Voice survey respondent at a Colorado public university shared, this spring a professor met one-on-one with individuals in a small class. "I was able to have a thorough conversation about my learning style, what I thought was working and what wasn't. He took notes, and while he couldn't tailor his instruction to any one student, he did a great job of switching up his teaching styles and being flex-

Professor Qualities From the Student Perspective

How students rate their professors over all in each of six areas (click on the arrows to view each)



Source: *Inside Higher Ed*/College Pulse survey of 2,000 college students; explore the data. Student Voice, an *Inside Higher Ed* and College Pulse collaboration, is presented by Kaplan.

ible so that everyone had an opportunity … to learn how they learn best. It was the most supported I've ever felt in school."

Impressions of Course Materials

Reynolds at Texas Christian gets frustrated by assumptions that $100 textbooks are affordable to students—and even more so when she can find a free online version of materials professors have asked students to purchase. "I don't think professors purposely want to choose the most expensive materials, but I definitely don't think that it's fully thought through," she says.

Only 38 percent of survey respondents believe professors take affordability into account when choosing instructional materials, while 22 percent say they do not (the remaining percentage reflects those who don't feel strongly either way). Students at four-year institutions (n=1,750) are three times more likely than those at two-year institutions (n=250) to feel professors aren't concerned about affordability.

In Adrianna Kezar's experience as director of the University of Southern California's Pullias Center for Higher Education, professors haven't understood just how hard students have been hit with textbooks costs. "That's a real concern and something we need to be spending more time thinking about," says Kezar, who leads the Delphi Project on Changing Faculty and Student Success. While higher ed has made progress addressing this issue, she sees it as "here and there messaging … There's not campus leadership saying, 'Let's rethink our strategy.'" In her opinion, provosts and individual academic department leaders need to be taking on the cause.

At Montgomery College in Maryland, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Sanjay Rai has supported and encouraged development and use of open educational resources. The MC Open initiative designates Z-courses and Z-degrees that allow students to take individual classes or earn a degree without spending any money on textbooks.

Impressions of Instructional Materials Choices

Statements students agree with; those not choosing either option do not feel strongly either way

53%

My professors choose diverse instructional materials.

28%

My professors choose homogeneous instructional materials.

61%

My professors choose up-to-date instructional materials.

13%

My professors choose outdated instructional materials.

46%

My professors choose interesting instructional materials.

21%

My professors choose boring instructional materials.

38%

My professors take affordability into account when choosing instructional materials.

22%

My professors do not take affordability into account when choosing instructional materials.

Source: *Inside Higher Ed*/College Pulse survey of 2,000 college students; explore the data.
Student Voice, an *Inside Higher Ed* and College Pulse collaboration, is presented by Kaplan.

Higher ed institutions can also partner with publishing companies and campus store providers to keep prices down. "We've got two agreements in place, and faculty can pick," says Petri of UMKC. Mini grants encourage professors to produce their own OER and course packs, and students are given guidance about their savings options. The university's Affordable & Open Educational Resources webpage also includes a form so that students can anonymously email a professor about textbook affordability.

Other instructional materials decisions got praise from Student Voice respondents. More than half of students say materials are up-to-date or reflect diversity, and nearly half say professors choose interesting course materials. Students at four-year colleges are more likely than those at community colleges to say professors choose homogeneous and/or boring instructional materials.

Teaching professor Jenny Amos in the Grainger College of Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign thinks students' impressions of course materials would have leaned more negative had the survey asked specifically about textbooks. "Many faculty like to teach from the book they learned from," she says, adding that she will pull from her own original textbooks sometimes out of habit.

For one foundational engineering course, Amos says the core textbook is accurate but that she brings in websites and other materials to ensure examples reflect current practices.

In general, adds Amos, engineering courses can easily tie in to hot topics like the engineer's role in social justice and equity or today's supply chain issues.

Her department leaders encourage professors to continue having flexible course materials as well. During COVID, students could often watch a recorded lecture or request a transcript—yet some faculty dropped those options as courses began meeting live again. Maintaining transcripts and recordings aligns well with typical accommodation requests from students with disabilities, who may need more time and an alternate way to engage with materials. "Whatever we do to meet a request for accommodations may benefit all students and enhance their learning," she says. "But for some faculty, it's an extra step and it's more work."

Montgomery College students have pushed for online learning continuing to be an option, even as learning has resumed in person (about two-thirds of courses as of spring 2022), Rai says, comparing the need to offer both in-person and virtual learning to the restaurant business. "Restaurants are not going to say, 'We're not doing GrubHub anymore.' They'll do both." Yet, higher ed as a whole is not prepared to continue accommodating students who can't be in class, Rai adds.

Montgomery students can register for courses designated as on-campus, distance learning (no scheduled meeting times) or remote (meets online at scheduled times).

Regarding students asking for recorded lectures as an accommodation, especially during COVID, graduate student Erick DuShane has experienced professors who create recordings but "sort of gatekeep the materials," thinking students are taking advantage of that option. "If a student asks for something, it's because they need them," says DuShane, who is studying social work at Boston College after having graduated from University of Rochester in 2020.

Assignment Grading Assessment

Only 5 percent of Student Voice respondents disagree that their professors generally grade fairly, while 44 percent strongly agree grades are fair. Even among the 370 students with GPAs of less than 3.0, 36 percent strongly agree about grading fairness, and only 6 percent disagree (most of this group has a GPA between 2.0 and 2.9, with just 41 respondents reporting having less than a 2.0).

Students at private colleges, compared to public colleges, are more likely to strongly agree, yet students at two-year colleges are more likely than their four-year-college peers to strongly agree. Among first-generation students, opinions about fair grading vary by race, with first-gen Asian students being the least likely to agree strongly about fairness.

Equity, transparency and honesty are important to fair grading, believes Stachowiak of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast. "I'll know it when I see it" thinking about assessing assignments isn't equitable, although it is the way many managers approach giving feed-

back to employees. "I don't think we should perpetuate that—building educational decisions to match dysfunction in the business world," she says.

One public university student in Georgia wrote that professors "choose favorite students, and they grade differently … I paid for these classes just to have my grades based on subjective views rather than my work."

Timely, meaningful feedback is difficult when class sizes are large, Stachowiak acknowledges. "I don't want to pretend those systemic issues aren't real." However, some faculty waste time marking incorrect grammar in a paper, even though research has shown that doesn't improve writing. She suggests noting in the syllabus the expectations students should have about how quickly grades will be turned around, so students aren't thinking assignments "should be back [within] an hour when I think a week is reasonable."

In terms of providing feedback to students efficiently, Stachowiak points to a feature some learning management systems have that allows a professor to message all students who didn't pass to encourage visiting during office hours for help, or message all who got an A to offer congratulations.

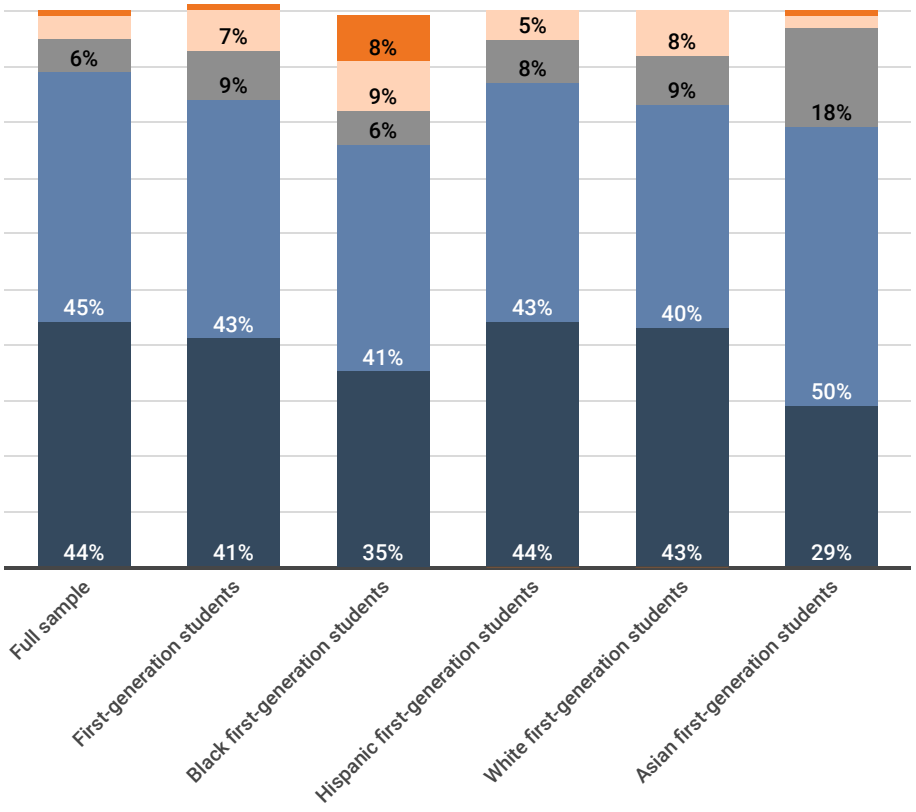
Feedback helps students to make course decisions as well. At Fordham University, where the deadline for course withdrawal without penalty has been extended during COVID (it was April 22 for spring 2022), students rely on timely grades and comments, says Rachel A. Annunziato, associate dean for strategic initiatives and a professor of psychology. "They need feedback to make decisions about whether they drop the class, and on how to work on the next paper based on the feedback from the last paper."

Petri from UMKC also encourages faculty to communicate on the syllabus about timing realities. For example, she says, "it'll take this long for a longer assignment and this long for a shorter assignment, and this is how long it will take for me to get back on an email." She will tell students about specific time blocks set aside for grading and note that she's a researcher who teaches.

Using rubrics, ideally with criteria communicated in advance of an assignment or exam, is a common grading-fairness recommendation. "You're telling them, 'In this skill you are lacking; here's what I was expecting and here's how you

Student Perspective on Fair Grading

How much students agree with this statement: "In general, my professors grade fairly."



Source: *Inside Higher Ed*/College Pulse survey of 2,000 college students; explore the data.
Student Voice, an *Inside Higher Ed* and College Pulse collaboration, is presented by Kaplan.

performed,'" says Amos, from Illinois. She suggests using grading software such as Gradescope or Crowdmark to help provide quick feedback using comment suggestions. In her experience, sometimes what students deem unfair about grading is not the grade itself but the communication of that grade.

Petri will have students go through peer review prior to submitting a big project, which builds their skills in providing constructive feedback plus involves their own assessment. "The self-assessment gives me something to respond to in my comments," she says, adding that some students go way too easy on themselves, while some are extra hard on themselves.

Tenure Favor

From Joe Hoyle's perspective as an associate professor of accounting at University of Richmond, an educator for more than 50 years and a blogger on teaching since 2010, students don't care much about faculty tenure or governance. "If you go to a nice restaurant and get a good meal, do you care much about where the chef went to college?" he says. But when a student gets a really bad professor or an older faculty member who seems to be off, that student may question why the person is still teaching and hear, "Oh, they've got tenure."

That lack of awareness may account for one in four Student Voice survey respondents answering "not sure" when asked whether they have a positive or negative view of tenured professors (defined in the survey as those who have essentially been granted permanent employment). Still, more than half feel the system sounds good, and more than three-quarters view tenure positively when unsure responses are removed.

> "Tenure is directly related to the diversity situation with our faculty, but I don't think students have really put that together, except for maybe in New England. If you're around the Harvards, the Yales, the Princetons, where they make the news all the time, your day-to-day might be different than in the Midwest. We don't really care what our universities do unless it's really juicy."

Perhaps surprisingly, the political leaning of respondents, whether they attended a private high school or if they are first-generation college students had little bearing on responses. Students who identify as being in the upper class socioeconomically do have a more positive view of tenure compared to those in other income groups, with about twice the positive responses (with a plus or minus 13 percent margin of error, however).

Students whose hometown is in New England are most likely to view tenure negatively, and those from states in the West are most likely to view it positively. Filtered by race, Black students are most likely to have a positive view (about one in three), compared to slightly less for Hispanic students, one in five white students and just 14 percent of Asian students. White students are most likely to look at tenure negatively.

"Tenure is directly related to the diversity situation with our faculty, but I don't think students have really put that together, except for maybe in New England," says Petri, who adds that it might be because the region has some of the oldest universities. "If you're around the Harvards, the Yales, the Princetons, where they make the news all the time, your day-to-day might be different than in the Midwest. We don't really care what our universities do unless it's really juicy."

At Fordham, when Annunziato was pursuing tenure, students would find out (when asked to officially evaluate her teaching, she believes) and ask how they could help. "I think it's really confusing, who's what and who's permanent." She wonders if the survey results leaning positive reflect that pandemic-era students are attracted to any concept involving certainty and stability in the current moment.

In a recent *Inside Higher Ed* survey, provosts showed support for

both the current tenure system and alternatives. Sixty percent agree (somewhat or strongly) that tenure "remains important and viable at my institution," but 60 percent also favor "a system of long-term contracts over the existing tenure system."

In the same survey, 73 percent of provosts say their institution relies "significantly" on non-tenure-track faculty for instruction, and nearly the same percentage anticipates no future change.

Just 3 percent of Student Voice survey respondents say an adjunct has been their favorite professor to date, while 7 percent identify a lecturer/instructor as favorite.

"Adjuncts are a very mixed bag," says Hoyle. "They often don't have much teaching experience, so it's kind of on-the-job training. They've got to hit the ground running, and sometimes that's just difficult."

DuShane, who participated in the CFES Brilliant Pathways college access and career readiness program prior to college, says he still doesn't quite understand differences between professor job titles, in part because titles doesn't reflect the best or the worst. "Some professors use tenure to their advantage and don't see a reason to adjust how they teach," he says. "I also think there are some part-time faculty who are really phenomenal and can be overlooked."

Montgomery College has focused in recent years on faculty professional development, including both full-time and part-time professors, with adjuncts receiving compensation for the Structured Remote Teaching training, says Rai. Instructors participate in a seven-week comprehensive training on engaging students, and the student completion rate has increased by 11 percentage points since 2014. In addition, the Faculty of the Year Award, which comes with a $5,000 prize, goes to one full-time faculty member and one part-time one, along with up to 19 outstanding faculty award opportunities, worth $2,000, annually.

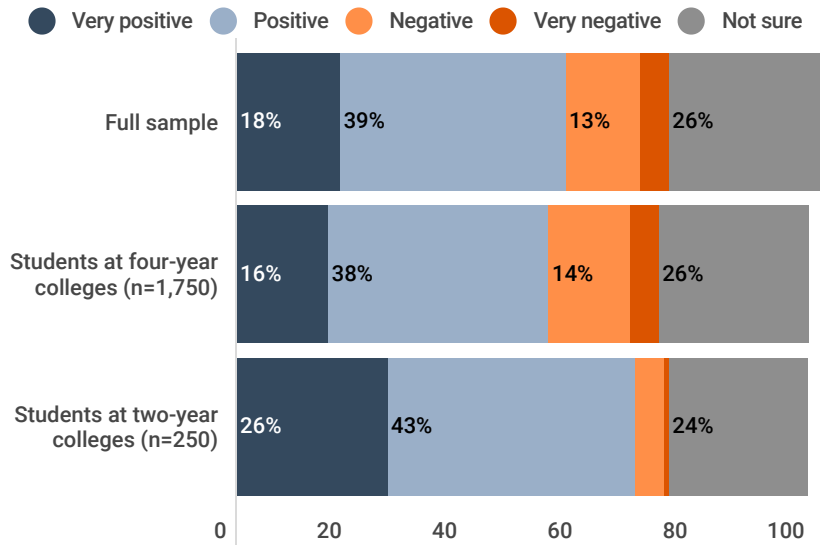
"I can tell you it's paying off," says Rai. The 2020 Survey of Entering Student Engagement from the Center for Community College Student Engagement listed Montgomery as one of the top institutions in the country on student engagement.

Although known as an R-1 institution, UIUC encourages excellence in teaching through several different instruction awards (both at the institution and academic school levels), and teaching academies add to quality instruction, says Amos. When she has won awards, the recognition came with fanfare and colleagues would request the opportunity to observe her teach.

Stachowiak calls on provosts everywhere to recognize excellent instruction. "Don't treat all faculty as a monolith," she says. "There are those who are really showing up and engaging learners. Find ways to promote and celebrate that." ■

Student Opinion on Tenure

How positive or negative students say their views are of tenured professors



Source: *Inside Higher Ed*/College Pulse survey of 2,000 college students; explore the data.
Student Voice, an *Inside Higher Ed* and College Pulse collaboration, is presented by Kaplan.

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/05/26/survey-students-largely-have-favorable-opinions-professors-tenure

D2L

Your institution is evolving, why isn't your LMS?

Partnering with you to make your goals, a reality

Learn More

Courseware Designed to Close Equity Gaps

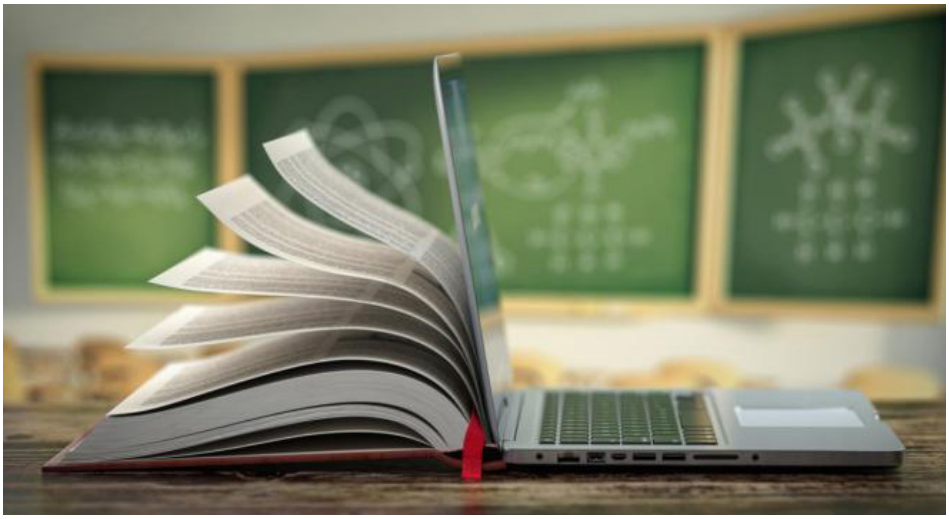
Coalitions of companies, colleges and research groups, funded by Gates, will develop digital courses especially aimed at improving learning outcomes for underrepresented students in gateway statistics and chemistry courses.

By Doug Lederman · Published April 13, 2022

The gaps remain stark: first-year students of color and learners from low-income backgrounds wash out of entry-level "gateway" courses at significantly higher rates than their white peers. Those early setbacks contribute significantly to the higher dropout rates that Black, Latino, Indigenous and Pell Grant–eligible students experience between their first and second year of college, and they ultimately are a factor in the persistently lower graduation rates for students from these groups.

Individual colleges and universities, national groups and philanthropies, and a slew of companies have worked in recent years to address this seemingly intractable problem. But a new initiative, still in its early stages, aims to bring all those players (and more) together to build high-quality, low-cost courses in 20 general education subjects that enroll the most students nationally.

The courses, the first of which are in Introduction to Statistics and general chemistry, will be specifically designed to increase the odds that students from all backgrounds and academic preparation levels have an equitable chance to succeed in those key courses—and ultimately in college. They will also be openly licensed, come with significant faculty training and support, and be rigorously evaluated by researchers to ensure that they are achieving the desired goals.



(Bet_Noire/istock/Getty Images Plus)

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the driving force behind the new initiative, providing millions of dollars to the two coalitions of about two dozen organizations involved in designing, building, testing and evaluating the new courses. In total, Gates will spend as much as $65 million over four years on the work around these courses, with a significant chunk of it going to three major projects this year.

Lumen Learning, which builds digital courseware using open educational resources, is leading the creation of the Introduction to Statistics course, in conjunction with organizations such as Digital Promise and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and institutions such as Howard University, Rockland and Tallahassee Community Colleges, and Santa Ana College that serve large numbers of minority students. Lumen will receive a $5 million grant.

Arizona State and Carnegie Mellon Universities are spearheading the development of the chemistry course along with OpenStax, the Rice University spinoff that creates free and flexible textbooks, as well as other partners.

And Macmillan Learning, a publisher-turned-technology company, will conduct research on the introductory sociology and psychology courses it delivers through its

digital platform Achieve to gauge whether they can deliver sufficiently equitable outcomes for racially and socioeconomically underrepresented students.

"The generally accepted understanding is that despite a ton of effort, gateway courses are still leading to perniciously bad outcomes for many students from underrepresented backgrounds," said Alison Pendergast, senior program officer for digital learning at Gates. "Our goal is to help the market see what exemplar courseware looks like that can lead to equitable outcomes for students."

"The generally accepted understanding is that despite a ton of effort, gateway courses are still leading to perniciously bad outcomes for many students from underrepresented backgrounds."

Gates has been at this work for some time, having undertaken numerous initiatives over the last decade aimed at increasing the use of digital courseware in service of its overall goal of "improv[ing] student outcomes and ensur[ing] that race, ethnicity and income are not predictors of postsecondary success.

A few things appear to differentiate this effort from its past work.

First, the foundation has clearly been influenced by the societal circumstances of the last two years, in which the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequity by disproportionately deterring the educational plans of learners from minority groups and low-income backgrounds, and the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted racial inequities in many realms.

Secondly, Gates, which has been criticized in the past for sometimes embracing technological solutions and adopting a "we know best" attitude, is emphasizing that the courseware developed through this initiative (a) is designed for blended—not fully online—educational settings, (b) will be heavily influenced by research involving underrepresented students and their instructors, a first for the foundation, and (c) will be accompanied by significant investments in training and support for the "humans" (Pendergast's word) who will make the courseware work: professors and instructional staff.

"In the past we've typically focused on technology" in its push for better courseware, Pendergast said, acknowledging a tendency that has rubbed Gates critics the wrong way. "But we know that courseware is implemented by faculty, and that they need more support and better professional development tools, as well as good data to drive improved instructional practice."

A Closer Look

The Lumen Learning–led project to develop introductory statistics course materials, which will cost no more than $40 a student, is furthest along so far. Lumen was among the companies, publishers, nonprofit organizations and universities that responded to a request Gates submitted inviting proposals to build courseware specifically designed to address racial and socioeconomic equity gaps.

Kim Thanos, founder and CEO of Lumen, said her company had submitted a proposal in part because the upheaval of the last two years had prompted her to ask whether she and the company "are doing enough on the issues of race and income." She said, "Like a lot of people, we took time to pause and reflect. We feel proud of the work we've done, but have we done enough? Have I done enough? I didn't feel like we had … We see this project as a way to begin to address that."

A news release from Lumen said that its task was to "create new courseware for Introduction to Statistics that can serve as an ex-

emplar of courseware centered in equity that makes a meaningful difference in student success."

What might be the elements of courseware for a statistics course that would make it more relevant to, or less likely to deter, a Black or low-income student? Isn't statistics color- (and income-)blind?

Thanos cited a few areas where publishers and designers of curricula and courses have frequently fallen short. First is the content, and its relevance to students' "lived experience," which can be crucial to whether students feel a sense of belonging in the classroom.

"Are all the examples brought in white Western examples? Do we only show evidence of success in this discipline for white men?" Thanos said. There's been a lot of work done on diversity, equity and inclusion around learning materials, but it's often "a very superficial coat of paint."

Secondly, she said, "there is no such thing as courseware or technology that's learning agnostic—technology has a perspective on things like how well-prepared users are, and a lot of technology fails to recognize that some students might be coming into the environment with less preparation or experience."

For instance, Lumen's recent work in testing out its existing courseware in learning centers at colleges like Rockland that serve many minority students revealed that "if I'm a minority student, I may be very reluctant to acknowledge I need help, because I'm already feeling like I don't belong," Thanos said.

Faculty members often tell students to seek help via email, a mode of communication that typically demands a professional tone. "So you're telling me that in this moment I'm struggling, I need to craft an all-important email," Thanos said. "Why not help them with some email templates? One of the solutions we're planning is a tool that would populate the draft of an email message for various things, like seeking help from a professor, to reduce my anxiety about reaching out."

Lumen also plans to use its Lumen Circles professional development tools for instructors—an outgrowth of its 2020 purchase of the assets of Faculty Guild—to provide faculty training in "practices that demonstrate caring, an element often left out of faculty support," Thanos said.

Versions of the courses from Lumen and the Arizona State/Carnegie Mellon collaboration are set to be available for pilot testing at institutions with significant populations of students of color in 2023, with significant user and efficacy testing to follow.

Gates isn't in a rush, and its officials appear to have embraced the message that technology without instructor support and understanding the context isn't enough.

"We're still bullish on the power of technology to help students," said Pendergast. "But you need a lot more than that—user and efficacy research, faculty training and support on effective teaching practices, and better institutional supports—if you really want to improve outcomes." ■

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/04/13/building-courseware-close-racial-gaps-gateway-classes

VIEWS

The Learning Imperative

Public university systems should invest in training and support for quality teaching, Félix V. Matos Rodríguez and Penny MacCormack write.

By Félix V. Matos Rodríguez and Penny MacCormack · Published April 7, 2022

As the pandemic hits the two-year mark and higher education takes full stock of its impact, the challenges we face are multiple—but so are the opportunities.

We face the largest enrollment decline in a decade. The pandemic continues to disrupt learning and affect the mental health of too many of our students. Our nation cannot afford to lose any more students in an economy that demands postsecondary education and a democracy desperate for informed citizens.

At the same time, as readers of know all too well, few faculty members are prepared to teach. Instead, they're prepared as subject-matter experts and researchers with the presumption that they will be good teachers by default. Traditionally, fostering good pedagogy is an afterthought at best, and most professors don't receive the same level of support or formal training in teaching.

Faculty members should not be expected to solve the educational challenges we face on their own. We must invest in quality teaching across higher education and equip faculty members with practices that can improve student learning, persistence and achievement.

(Allanswart/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

This is why, at the end of last year, we joined higher education leaders across the country to kick off the Power of Systems, a transformation agenda for the future of American higher education developed by the National Association of System Heads (NASH) through generous support from the Lumina Foundation, Strada Education Network, the ECMC Foundation, the Open Society Foundations and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The learning imperative—focusing on quality teaching—is one of five core imperatives that make up the Power of Systems agenda that leaders are coalescing around to advance student success and equity. In addition, NASH's learning imperative calls for the development, teaching and assessment of equity-centered academic and experiential curricula; flexible pathways of study with a more effortless transfer of credits from one institution to another; and better use of technology.

Across the City University of New York, we are advancing the learning imperative by making instructional excellence one of our signature issues, and we are leading a full-scale, multipronged effort to accomplish these goals. CUNY's systemwide Innovative Teaching Academy works to improve pedagogy and innovation. A $10 million

gift from the Mellon Foundation supports this work, including our new Transformative Learning in the Humanities program to promote new more equitable and engaged ways to teach the humanities. A new CUNY task force is identifying ways to enhance the importance of teaching in performance reviews and promotion and tenure decisions. Additional grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Charles Koch Foundation have enabled us to credential hundreds of faculty members in evidence-based teaching practices through the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE).

This partnership has been instrumental in CUNY's efforts. ACUE has codified and validated the teaching skills and knowledge that every professor should have. ACUE's Effective Practice Framework is now embraced by colleges and universities nationwide, too. Hundreds of faculty members across CUNY, and tens of thousands across the country, are developing these evidence-based teaching skills and earning the only nationally recognized collegiate teaching credential endorsed by the American Council on Education. A body of large-scale and rigorous impact studies shows that ACUE-certified faculty members retain more students, measurably improve student achievement and close equity gaps by using evidence-based teaching approaches in the classroom.

NASH's bold agenda asks more of system leaders who may be accustomed to largely setting goals, distributing resources and holding campuses accountable. As it should. In addition to CUNY, systems like the Texas A&M University system, the University of Missouri system and California State University are leading major initiatives to invest in effective teaching at scale.

For too long, the quality of teaching and learning was understood as a campus, or faculty, responsibility. But we know system leaders have the power to set the tone and put forward the necessary resources and conditions that directly impact the classroom.

When we think of learning, we usually think of the work of our students. But just imploring them to learn more is about as useless as a coach yelling at his players to score more runs. Instead, like the best coaches, we have an imperative to create the environments, provide the supports and set the paths that lead to true learning.

The systems NASH represents, including CUNY, have direct responsibility for approximately 75 percent of all students in public four-year colleges and universities. That is the Power of Systems, and the future is in our hands. ■

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez is chancellor of the City University of New York. Penny MacCormack is chief academic officer for the Association of College and University Educators.

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2022/04/07/public-systems-should-invest-teaching-quality-opinion

Teaching Centers Need to Step Up

Now is the time to take a leadership role and help faculty members understand that we actually know a lot about teaching and learning, writes Christopher M. Hakala.

By Christopher M. Hakala · Published July 13, 2022

With the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, colleges and universities looked to teaching centers and faculty development specialists to help transition pedagogy so that learning could continue in a manner that made sense given the challenges of a pandemic. Before that, teaching centers were considered beneficial to faculty members, and many had their share of "frequent fliers" who attended all the events.

But in reality, they really did not have an impact on a large percentage of faculty at the institution. Faculty members often viewed the teaching center on their campus as just an add-on that would help if they needed it, or worse, as a place where bad instructors went when they needed help.

All that changed when faculty members had to quickly and efficiently adapt their pedagogy to the new world of teaching remotely or asynchronously. At many institutions, including our university, the teaching center—along with many other units and individuals on the campus that support teaching and learning—worked with faculty across the institution to ensure that courses continued to be taught and students continued to learn. It was a time of "we are going to get through this somehow," and teaching centers provided the opportunity for faculty members to still deliver content and assess learning in a way that made sense throughout the crisis situation we were in.

(VioletaStoimenova/E+/getty images)

As the pandemic has continued to be a factor and we have learned to adapt and mitigate risk, the role of the teaching center has again shifted. But that shift is toward a new reality in which a number of things have become readily apparent.

- Faculty and institutions need to be ready to adapt to changing conditions very quickly, including being prepared to pivot once again should we encounter new challenges.
- Teaching centers can help faculty members create courses that can be adapted to operate under different conditions. A great deal of research shows how faculty can pivot, adapt and still deliver high-quality teaching and learning
- Students will, for many years, be prepared to adapt to changing conditions as well.
- Many of the pedagogical innovations that we developed during the early days of the pandemic worked terribly, like providing students with more independent work without support. At the same time, some worked very well, such as giving students a clearer understanding of the reasons behind the methods being used in the classroom.

- Teaching will never be the same. It will continue to evolve and improve as long as we keep student learning as our goal.

With the changes described above, teaching centers have become even more important on college campuses, as we sit, in fact, at the center of the pedagogical world of the institution. And the time to capitalize on that position at the university is now. Teaching centers should work hard, today more than ever, to help faculty members understand that we actually do know a lot about teaching and learning. And to be an effective instructor, recognizing what we know about how students learn and the variables that impact learning, we need to consider ways of teaching that are novel to us. Yet technology, while trumpeted as the answer, is only a part of the solution.

“To be an effective instructor, recognizing what we know about how students learn and the variables that impact learning, we need to consider ways of teaching that are novel to us. Yet technology, while trumpeted as the answer, is only a part of the solution.”

Now is the time for teaching centers to take a leadership role in the institution and help faculty understand that teaching and learning are distinctly relational processes. And to do that well, we need to know that the unidirectional aspect of teaching is not going to be as effective as teaching that values and leverages student learning in ways that make sense with the data that are coming out of the science of learning.

How can centers do this?

Centers can host a series of conversations with faculty about pedagogy. If open to the conversations, faculty would benefit from carefully considering how they navigate the classroom and beyond. To help faculty members, centers should talk about pedagogy in general, with an emphasis on student engagement. Faculty could learn about the evidence that demonstrates that there are many ways to engage students, and to do so within the framework of their discipline leads to the potential for more student engagement and more effective learning.

Topics for the conversations could include evidence-supported teaching practices (i.e., use of active learning to promote student engagement), or teaching strategies that make use of what we know about student learning (i.e., to learn effectively, students need to have the ability to utilize prior knowledge to incorporate newly learned material). By getting faculty members to begin to realize that we in teaching centers have an understanding of how students learn and how classrooms can be designed to be more effective, we can then help faculty begin to address specifically how to engage students to improve their learning.

Centers can provide specific teaching strategies to faculty—with data to support their efficacy if necessary—to help faculty guide students efficiently and effectively. Those strategies might include workshops on evidence-supported practices such as:

Retrieval practice: the idea that the more times a student has to reactivate and recall information under different conditions, the better the student can recall under test conditions.

Interleaving: teaching material, switching to newer material and then returning to the original content. Data demonstrate that reactivating the previously learned material can lead to stronger memory and learning over all.

Desirable difficulties: providing students with scaffolded problems that can lead to potential failure. Evidence has shown that by creating a situation in which work is required to solve a problem, even if the response is incorrect, the work done leads to more effective learning.

These three strategies have been shown to be incredibly useful for many faculty and lead to more effective memory (retrieval practice),

integration (interleaving) and problem solving (desirable difficulties). They are just a few of the specific strategies that would help faculty eventually help students.

Centers can communicate their work and contributions more widely and effectively across the campus. Many centers use newsletters or weekly email blasts as a means of communication. It is important to provide useful and actionable information in those newsletters. Faculty members are so inundated with newsletters and emails that we need to make sure that our messages are also concise, clear and worth reading.

Centers can also help by having open-door policies with faculty to ensure that they are approachable and available. Faculty will undoubtedly need the center at various times, under various conditions. With that in mind, the center should also have multiple access points for contact that include not only the email address for the center, but also perhaps the center director's email address. It should offer a phone number that is answered by an actual person and a variety of staff members that are around and provide service, so the center looks like—and is—a place where things happen.

Centers can act as liaisons. They can connect students and faculty in ways that help faculty understand student needs and perspectives. Those efforts can take the form of conversations between students and faculty to better understand the others' perspectives. They can also act as liaisons between faculty and administrators to help those administrators understand what faculty need to be effective instructors.

Centers can partner with colleagues on the campus to provide support for student learning. Those colleagues might include counseling centers, academic support centers, academic advisers and student leaders. For example, centers can co-sponsor events with counseling centers that address issues of mental health on the campus or can lead conversations with new faculty about academic advising. Centers have, traditionally, been the place for only faculty members to talk about teaching. Now is the time for that mission to expand.

The time for teaching centers to shine is now. Center directors' training has always served a small number of faculty on many campuses. We need to step that up now and broaden our approach to include many more stakeholders. Centers must consider that the main goal of a college or university is to educate students, and that our job is to support that goal. Yet as we have learned so keenly in the last two years, educating a student is not just something that happens in the classroom in a unidirectional manner. We have learned that good teaching and learning require engagement, effort and flexibility. Centers of teaching and learning specialize in understanding how to help students engage effortfully and how faculty can create flexible and effective learning environments. We need to leverage that knowledge across campus by increasing our visibility, and working across different offices is one of the keys to starting that process.

As I have noted, a transparent set of conversations between faculty members and both students and administrators helps guide a deeper understanding of the needs of the institution when it comes to supporting student learning. Teaching and learning on college campuses will undoubtedly improve under these conditions. And along with that, we will continue to provide the kind of education that our students deserve and that our faculty are able to give.

The future of higher education is uncertain, and the challenges we face are enormous. If we continue to focus on the core mission of most institutions, we can continue to thrive and provide the education our students need to succeed. By creating a teaching and learning center that is truly at the core of the mission of the institution, we will help faculty provide the kind of education that will serve our students in both the short and long term. ■

Christopher M. Hakala is the director for the Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship and professor of psychology at Springfield College.

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2022/07/13/teaching-centers-should-take-more-leadership-role-campuses-opinion

3 Questions to an Academic Administrator

A conversation about roles, careers and higher ed after COVID.

By Joshua Kim · Published January 28, 2021

Vickie Cook is among the most well-known and respected leaders and scholars in the world of higher education and online learning. I'm honored that Cook agreed to answer some of my questions about her alternative-academic career.

Q: My hope in this Q&A is to ask you about your experience, and advice, as an alternative academic. But so that everyone has some context, can you first help us understand what your job entails as the executive director of online, professional and engaged learning at the University of Illinois?

A: Online, Professional and Engaged Learning (OPEL) at UIS promotes learning through initiatives in four departments: Center for Online Learning, Research, and Service (COLRS); Continuing and Professional Education (CAPE); Office of Engaged Learning (OEL); and the Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE).

First related to online learning, I oversee the coordination of all support for our online academic programs. My team provides faculty support, marketing consultation, faculty development in online learning, support for academic programs related to market research and other related needs for new and existing programs. I provide oversight of all functions related to management and scheduling of online programs in consultation with individual colleges on campus. My team also coordinates with units that provide student support services in technology, and academic support such as tutoring, as well as other student life and student services across campus that extend the campus experience for students.

Related to professional learning, I oversee the areas of continuing education, summer camps and related customizable contracts with local businesses and organizations seeking continuing education and professional development. The Center for Faculty Excellence provides internal professional development for UIS faculty.

The Office of Engaged Learning is an area that oversees credit-bearing undergraduate internship programs and study away programs.

This fairly new unit is the result of institutional reorganization. Each of these areas are growth areas for the institution.

Q: In your career, you've been a professor, a dean, a VP, a consultant, a director and now an executive director. How have you navigated your alternative-academic career? What have you done to support alternative academics in your leadership roles? And what advice might you give to others like yourself (and me) trying to navigate an alt-ac career?

A: I have navigated my own career

by working with a group of excellent mentors. I have been very fortunate to have had other alternative-academic professionals who were willing to assist me and guide me through the nuances of my career. I have done my best to provide the same type of guidance to others who are now seeking to work toward their own alternative-academic pathways.

I have been very focused on encouraging staff and colleagues to seek out their degree options, to work with organizations outside the university and build networks within the professional community. I also have been very active in a variety of professional organizations such as UPCEA, OLC and others to assist with the professional development of those who are entering an alternative-academic career pathway for the first time.

I believe it is very important to have these conversations with faculty colleagues who are interested in roles outside of traditional teaching or research roles, as well. A number of colleagues that I have known started out on a faculty trajectory and determined that it was not as fulfilling as they had anticipated. Rather than lose great colleagues to industries outside of higher education, conversations about other options can be helpful as individuals determine their most effective pathway in finding a fulfilling career.

Q: Let's talk about higher ed after COVID. What do you think will be different? What should colleges and universities be doing now to prepare for the post-pandemic university? And finally -- related to higher education -- what is keeping you up at night?

A: I think much will be different in higher education post-COVID. I believe the expectations of both students and faculty will be different. I believe that students will expect more effective use of technology.

I believe faculty will expect students to more effectively utilize learning tools to demonstrate mastery of learning outcomes. I also think that universities will need to rethink budgets and appropriations for facilities and support on campuses when compared to the amounts they are spending on technology, digital security, digital accessibility and open educational resources available to all students. Marketing and admissions expectations will change -- have already changed. All of these aspects will create change in higher education as we knew it in January 2020. Others have provided solid documentation on trends that are anticipated. Watching those trends and determining the best path forward in higher education is critical.

What is keeping me up at night is how we will manage the challenges financially that COVID-19 has caused while still meeting the needs of our students. At the end of the day, universities must meet the needs of their students by providing strong teaching, strong research opportunities and the ability to demonstrate a positive effect on our world. No small task. But, the good news is, we have good people across the country that will help move higher ed forward. ■

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/learning-innovation/3-questions-alt-ac-vickie-cook

Engineering Learning

Transforming instructors into learning architects.

By Steven Mintz · Published July 13, 2022

In a series of recent articles, one of higher ed's leading futurists, Michael Feldstein, predicts that the higher education's future will be blended: combining the virtual and the face-to-face and melding guided inquiry with active and experiential learning.

Feldstein, who, at various times has served as assistant director of the SUNY Learning Network, a product and program manager at Cengage and Oracle, a partner at MindWires Consulting, co-publisher of eLiterate, and now as co-founder and chief innovation officer at Argos Education, is one of those surprisingly rare figures in higher ed who brings together thought leadership with real-world implementation experience.

In other words, his forecasts are grounded in a realistic sense of what is and isn't likely.

Feldstein is, as his record suggests, convinced that technology will play a bigger role in instruction, not simply because of its possible cost efficiencies, but its potential to address some of the shortcomings in teaching today. These include the need to do a better job to:

- Scaffold learning.
- Tailor instruction to individual student needs.
- Address differences in levels of student preparation.
- Promote collaboration.
- Monitor engagement and learning.
- Provide more timely, substantive and constructive feedback.

(Filipovic018--/Istock/Getty Images Plus)

Technology, in his view, can help accomplish all these goals, but this will require instructors to rethink their role and conceive of themselves as learning experience engineers, activity architects and assessment designers.

Why? Because instructors, especially those in the most challenging, high-demand disciplines, will be under intense pressure to:

- Reduce performance and achievement gaps and ensure that all students in a particular course achieve a minimal viable level of competency.
- Ensure that students acquire discipline-based modes of thinking and can apply discipline-specific skills.
- Expand students' opportunities to engage in inquiry, investigation and active learning by doing.
- Make certain that their students remain engaged and on track.

I doubt that most instructors will have the resolve, competence or time to design the kinds of next-generation interactive courseware that Feldstein foresees as a key component in the future of teaching. But, then, individual instructors won't need to reinvent the wheel. They

could adopt courseware, much as they adopt textbooks, or could remix, edit and modify instructional materials, if licensing terms permit.

My own guess is that a path forward will involve partnerships between academic publishers, teams of specialists and foundations and other funders, with Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative or the Dana Center/Agile Mind and their Advanced Mathematical Decision Making course materials as plausible models.

All of which raises several questions:

- **Will faculty be willing to adopt courseware that will serve as the spine for a particular class?** A textbook is typically a learning resource, usually combined with other readings. It's a component of a course, not its backbone. Courseware, even if customizable, largely dictates the course's organization, content and assessments. Currently, very few faculty members have adopted existing courseware, though there are some exceptions, like Pearson's MyLabs.
- **Will faculty be willing to cede much of the responsibility for content creation and instructional design to external groups of professionals?** Already, some instructors rely on PowerPoint slides, classroom handouts and test banks provided by publishers. I've also taught at prestigious institutions in which teaching assistants deliver courses and course materials designed and developed by faculty members. But I think it's fair to say that this approach is widely viewed as shocking, as unprofessional and a dereliction of an instructor's responsibilities. It remains to be seen whether mass-produced courseware will be viewed similarly.
- **Will courseware be a step toward standardizing instruction and reducing the personal touches that individual instructors provide?** There is, of course, something to be said on behalf of standardized coverage. This ensures that all students who take a particular course should have mastered the same content and skills. It strikes me as likely that a heavy reliance on courseware could, potentially, constrain some of the individuality of courses. But since the courseware only provides a course's online content, what occurs in class, in the actual interaction of an instructor and students, can remain highly personalized.

> "Technology ... will require instructors to rethink their role and conceive of themselves as learning experience engineers, activity architects and assessment designers."

My personal view is that while interactive courseware holds out the promise of enhancing student learning and raising the average level of instructional quality—provided, of course, that the learning materials meet genuinely high standards of excellence—there is a real danger that it could reinforce already existing tendencies to:

- Treat foundational and gateway courses unimportant, as literal service classes that are obligatory but perfunctory and undeserving of the serious attention of tenured faculty.
- Replace expert instructors and scholar teachers with course mentors and teaching assistants, since much of the content delivery is shifted online.
- Reduce the amount of required reading and degrade learning by transforming it into a process of simply completing various assignments.
- Assess student learning in largely mechanical ways that can be automated. My review of high school Advanced Placement questions in history suggests that most do not test students' higher-order thinking skills or conceptual understanding, let alone their research, analytic and writing skills.

Let me state right here that I myself, in collaboration with a team of graduate students and undergraduates, have developed courseware that I use in my very large U.S. history survey classes. The questions that I ask of other developers are the very questions that I ask of myself. I know full well that all too many students regard the courseware modules as my class's only important component and treat the in-person portion of the course as inconsequential.

Here is the rub. I want instructors to consider themselves learning architects whose primary responsibilities as teachers are to:

- Transform their course into a journey and a community of inquiry with a goal of bringing all students to success.
- Design engaging, purposeful learning activities.
- Track, scaffold and proactively support student learning.
- Develop meaningful assessments that truly evaluate students' knowledge and skills, including their higher-order and critical thinking skills.
- Provide meaningful, substantive and useful feedback.

Interactive courseware can help us achieve those goals. It should, indeed, play a crucial role in the future of higher education. I, for one, have benefited enormously from my ability to keep an eye on student engagement and on the content and problems that students find confusing. Still, we must be wary of delegating too many of our responsibilities as teachers to others.

Teaching is, first and foremost, a matter of relationships—relationships of trust, support, encouragement. It necessarily involves improvisation, creativity, inventiveness and inspiration. Without those elements, education is nothing more than training.

So remember: while training is about the acquisition and practice of particular skills, education is about learning—acquiring the capacity to research, think critically and communicate effectively in any context. While a small number of autodidacts can learn on their own, most of us require something more: a guide, a mentor, a Virgil to guide us on our quest. ■

Steven Mintz is professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin.

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/engineering-learning

How Campus Innovation Happens

Since institutional transformation rarely comes top down and seldom results from deliberate design, senior administrators need create opportunities for faculty and staff to innovate.

By Steven Mintz · Published July 7, 2022

Colleges and universities have changed profoundly over the past quarter century, but not in the ways that innovators predicted.

To be sure, some of the disruptors' dreams have been realized, at least in part.

- Lower-cost degree options have expanded, mainly due to the efforts of the mega-online non-profit providers like Southern New Hampshire and Western Governors Universities that have unbundled the traditional college experience and adopted new staffing models.
- Synchronous and asynchronous online learning has expanded, especially at the Master's level.
- Alternate providers have proliferated, including the MOOC distributors, including Coursera and edX, tech firms like Amazon and Microsoft, and museums and institutes, sometimes in partnership with degree-granting institutions.
- Faster, cheaper degree alternatives – certificates and non-degree certifications and apprenticeships – have multiplied.

But the biggest changes have occurred elsewhere.

1. The organizational structure of colleges and universities has grown much more complex

(Skynesher/Istock/Getty Images Plus)

2. Colleges have become hubs for service provision.
3. Graduate and professional education has greatly expanded.
4. Research, grants, and contracts loom much larger than in the past.
5. Ancillary income from a host of money-making programs (including summer camps and campus rentals) has become much more important to sustaining campuses financially.

This list underscores an essential but underrecognized fact: Significant changes in higher education generally occur unnoticed if they fail to fit the established narratives.

The issue I want to investigate today is how innovation takes place in higher ed.

- Does innovation flow from the top down? Or from the bottom up? Is it a byproduct of external pressures? Or from shifts in the zeitgeist?
- Are administrators the drivers of innovation? Or are faculty, students, accreditors, foundations, professional societies, policy advocates, or government agencies?
- Is the major force driving innovation the quest for revenue and reputation? Fear of litigation or

protest? Or are the forces for institutional transformation more idealistic?

In a 1997 review of David Tyack and Larry Cuban's *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, the classic 1995 history of a century of public school reform, Seymour Papert, the mathematician, founder of MIT's Media Lab, and one of the pioneers in developing Constructivist learning theory, offered a series of reflections on the process of educational innovation and institutional transformation.

Papert, who was convinced that technology was poised to transform education much as it was already upended other sectors of the economy, was initially concerned that Tyack and Cuban were arguing that a series of impediments – bureaucratic inflexibility, for example, or a stubborn commitment to tradition or resistance from teachers, parents, unions, and others -- made educational innovation virtually impossible.

But as he pondered the book's arguments more closely, he became convinced that the authors in fact offered new ways of thinking about how educational innovation takes place – not by deliberate design, but, rather, through a Darwinian process of evolution. This was a process in which institutions adapt, usually incrementally, but sometimes more rapidly, as a result of environmental pressures, experimentation, mimicry, and competition.

According to Papert, the key to understanding why some novel developments thrive and others flail lies in a distinction between innovation and the actual process of institutional change.

Educational innovations are intentional, purposeful efforts to alter fundamental aspects of the educational experience, such as the department structure, the academic calendar, the credit hour, curricula, pedagogy, instructional staffing, student support, or assessment.

But Papert argued that institutional change is rarely the product of deliberate design. Many of the most profound and long-lasting changes in education occur in other ways. For example, many changes in institutions:

- Emerge in response to an external development: enactment of a law, rulemaking by a regulatory agency, a court decision or simply the threat of litigation, activist pressure, a highly successful model for emulation, or a wholly unexpected development like the pandemic and reckoning with race and equity and the mental health issues it spawned.
- Arise in reaction to a perceived threat or opportunity.
- Are driven by individual faculty members pursuing their own agenda.

Also, an innovation's effects are often unintended. Take, for example, the introduction of computers. Innovators envisioned computers overturning the status quo, by making learning more active, interactive, collaborative, and, above all, more personalized. Computers, early adopters believed, could customize pace, content, activities, assessments, and each student's learning trajectory.

That wasn't to be. Computers were quickly assimilated into the existing state of affairs, used to deliver readings and worksheets and facilitate drilling and quizzing. Insofar as computers did ease the research process, these devices, ironically, also made it nearly effortless for students to cut, paste, and plagiarize.

Innovations often fail, Papert, like Tyack and Cuban, argues, not because faculty are lazy or uninterested, but due to the sociology of bureaucratic organizations. Misguided incentives, inadequate supports and training, and organizational structures, rules, and procedures that don't easily enable innovation discourage many of the most far-sighted, creative, and inventive faculty members from launching educational initiatives that extend outside their own classrooms.

Also impeding innovation is a conformist bias toward the conventional. Any deviations from standard practice, or what Tyack and Cuban called the grammar of schooling, are inherently risky. Just as it used to be said that no one ever got fired for buying from IBM, no one is likely to be criticized for following normal practice, time-honored conventions, and established procedures. Innovations are held to a high standard, and junior faculty innovate at their own risk.

At the heart of Papert's argument is a Darwinian-informed understanding of how institutions evolve. According to the great British naturalist, the evolution of species is not a product of a guiding hand, nor is

it centrally directed, nor does it reflect a preexisting developmental plan. Evolution results from the interplay of such factors as environments that favor certain living forms and disfavor others; random mutations, some of which thrive while others falter; and diversity, which maximizes the possibilities for evolutionary change.

A similar process can be found at educational institutions. Despite the claim that such institutions are notoriously resistant to innovation, colleges and universities regularly undergo change. Sometimes these changes reflect ideas, especially those ideas backed by foundation dollars or encouraged by accreditors or popularized by the higher ed press. Sometimes these innovations are products of necessity, as institutions pursue cost efficiencies or try to tap new student markets. At times, these innovations emerge in response to student pressure. And more often than not, these innovations are championed by associate deans or associate provosts seeking to make their reputation or by visionary faculty members whose motives are highly idealistic.

The best-known theories of innovation, like John F. Kotter's 8 step process of organizational change, are top down. Senior leadership not only defines a strategic vision, but creates a sense of urgency, builds a guiding coalition, communicates a vision of institutional change, removes barriers, generates short-term wins, cultivates buy-in, and anchors change in the institution's culture.

> "Many of higher ed's most vaunted innovations started small and were the work of a small number of extraordinarily committed faculty visionaries."

Sure, there are a very few university presidents who succeed in imprinting their vision on an entire institution. Think Arizona State's Michael Crow or Southern New Hampshire's Paul LeBlanc or Western Governors's Scott Pulsiver.

Then there are some presidents who make highly strategic use of donor dollars to develop distinctive areas of campus strength. Hunter College's Jennifer Raab's creation of honors scholars cohorts in the visual and performing arts, computer science, humanities, nursing, public policy, and the natural sciences, the Cooperman Business Center, the Dolciani Mathematics Learning Center, the Zankel Arts Hub, and Presidential Student Engagement Initiative offer a striking model of how external fundraising can be used purposefully shape a campus' identity.

But in the instances I am most familiar with, many of higher ed's most vaunted innovations started small and were the work of a small number of extraordinarily committed faculty visionaries, like my UT colleague David Laude, who spearheaded the development of UTeach, a teacher preparation program that prepares STEM teachers, the Freshman Research Initiative, which engages more than 900 first-year students annually in mentored research, and student success initiatives that include the Texas Interdisciplinary Plan and the University Leadership Network, which offer academic support and experiential learning and career readiness opportunities.

Or take the example of my Hunter College colleague Michael Steiper. An evolutionary anthropologist, he created a multidisciplinary program in human biology with tracks in body, mind and health, human evolution and variation, and human organizations that quickly grew to become the campus' third largest degree program.

So what, then, are some proven ways to drive innovation?

1. Campus leadership should work closely with faculty and staff to Identify areas of need and opportunity.

Encourage entrepreneurial faculty to tackle existing campus problems or to pursue emerging opportunities. Perhaps your campus has a particular problem with sustaining students' academic momentum in year 2 or advising students who are closed out of their first choice major or ensuring that transfer students aren't closed out of required courses. Encourage faculty and staff to generate and implement solutions – then recognize and reward them for their efforts.

Also, make sure faculty know about relevant opportunities. For example, embolden faculty members to apply for institutional grants.

2. Let a thousand flowers bloom.

Since innovation only rarely comes top-down, create a environment in which faculty and staff feel encouraged to innovate. Make sure that innovators get the resources, time, and support they need to bring ideas to fruition. Recognize, reward, support, showcase, and scale successful innovations. Don't let inspiring success stories go untold.

3. Create islands of innovation where experimentation can flourish.

Test beds, innovation hubs, incubators, and accelerators are all the rage in the tech world. These are physical spaces where researchers, innovators, and startups can transform ideas into innovative products and services. Higher education already has something somewhat similar: maker spaces, collaborative workspaces where students and faculty can ideate, brainstorm, iterate, and engage in rapid prototyping.

But our campuses also need another kind of space, where alternatives to standard practice in teaching and learning can be tested, free from many existing institutional constraints.

4. Construct a culture of innovation.

Organize campus conversations. Stage innovation showcases. Create a system of rewards for innovations that solve campus problems, or that capitalize on an opportunity. We reward research and teaching, but we also need to do more to acknowledge and value those faculty who dedicate themselves to making the campus a warmer, more welcoming, more vital place.

Higher education today talks an awful lot about leadership. The nation's most selective campuses pride themselves on their ability to identify, enroll, and nurture this nation's future leaders, not just its future political leaders, but leaders in medicine, science, technology, and other fields as well. More and more campuses offer leadership skills development workshops, where undergraduates learn how to take initiative, delegate responsibilities, handle conflict, and manage and motivate others.

In academic environments, a leader's most important skill is not to direct, drive, or spearhead change. Rather, leadership's biggest responsibility is to work with faculty and staff to identify and define campus priorities, increase and appropriately invest campus resources, collect and share data, align incentives with campus goals, and showcase and reward success.

The most successful campus leaders are highly effective fundraisers, but that is not enough. They must also motivate, inspire, and empower faculty and staff. That requires senior leadership to listen effectively, share responsibility, and award credit where credit is due. Unfortunately, those leadership skills are, I fear, as rare as a hen's tooth. ■

Steven Mintz is professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin.

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/how-campus-innovation-happens

The Future of Faculty Development Is Feminist

Colleges must mend the gap between conventional views about what faculty need for support and what faculty actually want, writes Niya Bond.

By Niya Bond · Published April 15, 2022

Is higher education failing faculty? This is what I asked myself after taking the pulse of postsecondary professional development via recent job postings. Too many of these postings seemed to prioritize mechanics over meaning or make a mismatch between pedagogy and technical proficiency. The apparent favoring of HTML over human beings is disconcerting.

One recent morning, especially sour with the current state of affairs, I tweeted about my faculty development views. In response, many educators expressed a similar sense of disappointment, acknowledging the gap between the kind of in-depth development that can help faculty to flourish versus the quick-fix Band-Aids that don't seem to bring much balm.

After reading those replies, I couldn't help but think that such job descriptions are telling us something important about the disconnect between conventional views about what faculty need as far as support and what faculty actually want. Such a gap is a part of a larger dilemma of increasing faculty disengagement in our college and university communities, which is at once a reasonable self-protective measure in a continuing pandemic and, at the same time, an indication of more pervasive and long-term problems. One of those problems seems to be paltry professional development.

So what's the answer? Can we effectively reimagine faculty development for the whole person—focus on the holistic before the HTML? What pedagogy might provide a pathway for this purpose? Is there hope for the future of faculty development in higher education?

Re-Engaging Faculty With Feminist Facilitation

In her piece "99 Tips for Faculty Development in End Times," Karen Costa argues that, right now, educators "need a lot less development and a lot more support." She encourages us to reconsider faculty development as "teaching and learning together." And her call for reframing development as facilitation—words matter!—is in line with the feminist pedagogical call for a guide on the side rather than a sage on the stage.

I've written before about how feminist pedagogy provides a practical pathway for disrupting traditional classroom hierarchies, and I'm part of a group of feminist pedagogues trying to spread the word about the power of this undoing, particularly in online spaces and places. At our Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online site, we promote feminist pedagogical tenets that help empower educators with specific

strategies for seeing learners not as empty vessels but instead as active and agentic co-creators. I want to suggest that we should also apply those principles to faculty development via what I'm calling "feminist facilitation"—which can be just as feisty.

What does that look like in action? In the OLT Community of Practice that I co-facilitate, when we realized that faculty members were feeling overwhelmed during the pandemic, we asked what we could do to enhance our caring-first approach to coaching. Faculty members replied that the community functioned for them as a both-and space: a place where they could come to re-energize their teaching during COVID as well as one that provided a nice escape from postsecondary pressures. So we used this liminal positioning as a catalyst for change, taking a multipronged approach to co-creation. We posted self-care strategies, shared stories about teaching and learning in trying times, and prior-

itized the personal as much as the pedagogical.

By way of a feminist intervention—akin to what Judit Török and Maura Conley describe as a "decentered collective community"—we experienced firsthand how decentering can lead to the delights of dismantling. Everyone was teaching and learning together, simultaneously. This synchronicity was enhanced by the community's come-as-you-can membership, wherein faculty have access to all of the materials and full use of the medium but can pick and choose their teaching/learning adventures. According to Maha Bali and Autumm Caines, "The inflexibility of time and space of traditional faculty development is inherently inequitable." Mostly asynchronous approaches and alternative means of engagement are strategies that I especially appreciate, not only as a feminist facilitator but also as a mother, multiprofessional and online adjunct who sometimes needs pedagogical nourishment in the off hours.

Reframing Faculty Development as Foundational

In addition to teaching and learning synchronicity, multiplicity of means is something that Alexandra Mihai sees as integral for the future of faculty development. She encourages institutions to be more strategic about faculty support by incentivizing teaching alongside research, investing in communities of practice and reimagining faculty development and the scholarship of teaching and learning as part and parcel of an evidence-based approach. In other words, institutions need to embrace a paradigmatic shift that can help them illuminate the importance of teaching—and that light-up needs to be intense.

Shifts of this sort happen at Lumen Circles, where I facilitate nine-week Belonging and Inclusive Teaching Fundamentals circles. In those communities, we interrogate power and privilege, promote cooperative interaction, and honor our lived experiences through iterative self-reflection that makes them part and parcel of our evidence-based pedagogy. In so doing, we rebel against more generalized forms of faculty development that, in their one-size-fits-all approach, can fail to recognize and represent diverse faculty identities.

The community-driven components of the circle align with what Emily Skop and her co-authors refer to as an "ethos of care," where research teams are actively engaged in changing academic culture through social justice collaborations that promote equity and address systemic injustices. Faculty, as evidence-based agents of change, are engaged in collaborative caring, too. And teaching teams, fueled by feminist facilitation, can function as gateways for the expansion of inclusive pedagogy and the cultural changes that come from it.

The Forecast for Faculty Development

Clearly, despite my somewhat blue beginning, I do not believe that all hope is lost when it comes to faculty development in higher education. The fix might just be in the function. Structurally and systemically, faculty support needs to become less a complacent afterthought and more an intentional constant. That constant is especially important, in the words of Bali and Caines, for "marginal or different from the majority" faculty who may feel as if they are practicing pedagogy on the peripheries. We need institutional, not just individual, buy-in for programs like OLT Faculty Development and Lumen Circles. Establishing this infrastructure is an equity essential. If we can reinforce these efforts with feminist facilitation, the forecast for faculty development actually looks quite favorable. ■

Niya Bond is a faculty development facilitator specializing in feminist, belonging and online pedagogies; a co-curator at Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Online; an online English educator; an academic adviser; and a Ph.D. candidate in higher education at the University of Maine, studying online faculty support.

Read Original Article ▸▸ https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2022/04/15/providing-holistic-professional-development-faculty-members-need-opinion

Inside Higher Ed

1150 Connecticut Avenue NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036

CREDITS

Design & Edited By:
Inside Higher Ed

Sponsored By:
D2L

Image Sources:
GettyImages.com