Strategic Thinking about Educational Attainment

A Summary Framework Provided by SunGard Higher Education

1. Inflation-adjusted per-student governmental subsidies in the U.S. and many other countries are under severe downward pressure as most macro and micro economies navigate through the "great recession" and the disruptive ongoing vagaries of globalization.

2. Scaling education's capacity to produce "intellectual capital" has meanwhile become critical to the sustainability of civilization in its environmental, civic, and socioeconomic dimensions.

3. Education's external "investors" (students, families, donors, employers, and governments), however, have become increasingly frustrated by issues of affordability, access, flexibility, student success, and "interoperability" (interoperability issues such as secondary-to-tertiary articulation and credit transfer).

4. Exacerbating the **educational attainment challenge** to credential a greater proportion of the adult population are demographic trends toward increased diversity. Trying to increase educational attainment while diversity is also increasing implies the need to attract, enroll, retain, and credential a tertiary student body increasingly weighted by first-generation, underprepared, needy students – a challenge to traditional educational segmentation and enrollment management practices.

5. Affordable and successful access will require reductions in per-credential costs in the face of waning per-student public funding – in order neither to increase tuition unduly for the growing proportion of needy students nor to squeeze institutions with untenable need-based grants or tuition discounts.

6. The above funding issues, affordability requirements, and demographic and academic performance and accountability challenges interact to create a "**learning productivity agenda**," which can be defined as the need to address the following educational attainment goals simultaneously and holistically in a cradle-to-grave educational pipeline:
   a. <u>Increase the proportion of tertiary credential holders in the adult population</u> in order to improve environmental, economic, and civic security within and across political jurisdictions.
   b. <u>Improve credential attainment rates</u> by increasing annual ratios of credentials granted to unduplicated student headcount.
   c. <u>Reduce per-credential delivery costs</u> by decreasing the annual ratio of total "*Education and Related" expenses* to total credentials granted.
   d. <u>Validate and account for learning and learning readiness</u> by selectively using independent, constructivist, normative assessments to account, not only for professional and workforce learning where external outcome assessments or certifications are already available, but also for the articulation between and effectiveness of secondary and tertiary education as indicated by assessments administered periodically to gauge the "readiness" of the student for the next stage of learning basic fluencies, critical thinking skills, and optional but core subject matter – the general education outcomes commonly proclaimed by education providers to be at the heart of further learning and productive citizenship.

7. Improving learning productivity (as defined above) at scale will be unfeasible, unless IT-enabled innovation and service process redesign strategies are broadly adopted. In education, this means using some combination of the IT-enabled "**Course Redesign Strategy for the Curricular Commons**," "**Flex Strategy for Redesigning Programs and Services**," and "**External Sourcing and Partnering Strategy for "Flattening" Service Models**.

8. Many governments find education unaccountable and its "business model" (based on credit hours attempted) overly costly. Many education providers believe government funding to be inadequate and unreliable. Many students and families find formal education unaffordable, inflexible, bafflingly inaccessible, "slow," and not in synch with the **digital cloud** in which young people learn what they learn and communicate with whom they communicate.

9. To resolve these frustrations, education and its external investors should collaborate to "unbundle" the education marketplace into a mutually affordable "**learning cloud**" by a) removing structural barriers to the interoperability of educational processes and b) relying on technical interoperability in the digital cloud to offer information about education and quality-assured learning resources via high-tech online self-service, complemented as individually needed by high-touch advice and mentoring.

Sources

The above framework compactly summarizes the complex, interconnected nature of the "educational attainment challenge" facing education today. It also addresses the "how" of improving educational attainment. The framework offers visibility into the necessary role of technology in education's future – a role that is less about advances in technology than about how to start using current technologies in ways that map strategically to education's future. The framework draws on featured papers from a recent EDUCAUSE Review focused on rethinking the future of higher education. These featured papers include a "Web Bonus" paper written by SunGard Higher Education's Dr. Bill Graves to describe a "learning productivity" agenda for refining both the academic and financial goals of educational attainment.

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Innovation: Rethinking the Future of Higher Education

Cover Article

Innovating the 21st-Century University: It's Time!

DON TAPSCOTT AND ANTHONY D. WILLIAMS

If colleges and universities open up and embrace collaborative learning and collaborative knowledge production, they have a chance of surviving and even thriving in the networked, global economy of the future.

http://www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Review/EDUCAUSEReviewMagazineVolume45/Innovatingthe21stCenturyUniver/195370

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BRENDA GOURLEY

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From the Campus to the Future

DIANA G. OBLINGER

Although the purpose of higher education has not changed in centuries, information technology—with its drive for innovation and entrepreneurism—has increased the options for widening that purpose from the campus of today to the future of society worldwide.

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Web Bonus

Waste Not the Learning Productivity Crisis

WILLIAM H. GRAVES

The time is right for higher education to pursue "best for the world" strategies enabled by the strategic use of information technology to improve learning productivity by serving more students more effectively while simultaneously creating a privately and publicly affordable, stable financial model for learning—securing education's future as an affordable first-priority imperative for students, families, donors, employers, and governments.

http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM1014.pdf