

# Overcoming Obstacles to Progress

A Collection of Insights for Addressing Enterprise-Level Challenges in Higher Education

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EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP  
INSTITUTE

# Overcoming Obstacles to Progress

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# Introduction

## Addressing Strategic Enterprise Issues in Higher Education

More than a professional development program, the University of Tennessee Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) strives to be a resource for addressing important challenges enterprise leaders face in directing their campuses, institutes, and the System to achieve the highest standards of excellence. This compendium of original articles written by the ELI Class of 2020 presents their observations and insights on a wide array of issues important to leaders across the University of Tennessee System and higher education.

Each author selected a topic based on their interest in offering insights to addressing problems or opportunities they felt important to enterprise-level leaders. The ELI defines enterprise leaders as a collective of executive-level people whose primary responsibility is the success of the entire enterprise. Ideally, these are the individuals who balance the overall university interests aligned with their unit's interests. The ELI operates from the premise that enterprise leaders think differently from traditional line leaders. They demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the university, its various components, and the environment within which it operates. Experts specializing in enterprise-level research and analysis universally stress that the greatest success necessary at this level results from leaders who appreciate and can leverage *interdependent* or collective work.

The ELI attempts to focus not only on the pragmatics of executing enterprise leadership but tackling the most troubling problems facing enterprise leaders, often referred in the literature as *wicked problems*. One profound difference between traditional leadership development programs and the ELI is the importance of developing leaders capable of tackling wicked problems. Wicked problems are almost always “big picture” problems. They are difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements often difficult to recognize.

Solutions to wicked problems are neither right nor wrong. They are either better or worse. Typically, an action that helps one aspect of the problem has unintentional consequences for others. Higher education is replete with wicked problems – problems that emerge when the institution faces constant change or unprecedented challenges either externally or internally. Wicked problems occur in a social context that aggravates competing results and disagreement among stakeholders because they cross boundaries and span the work of the enterprise. The less clarity of a singular solution, the more wicked the problem.

The articles in this collection endeavor to identify and respond to wicked problems. Not all of the topics are specifically wicked, but they are obstacles to progress for enterprise leaders and any effort to overcome them would improve the organization.

Final production of this journal was made possible by Mrs. Melissa Tindell, ELI Class of 2020, Director of Communications, University of Tennessee System Department of Communications and Marketing. She worked alongside John Lacey, Project Manager, UT System Department of Communications and Marketing, to design and produce this inaugural journal issue. We thank Mrs. Tindell for her time on this project, and appreciate her enthusiastic and innovative support of the program

## About the University of Tennessee Executive Leadership Institute

The objective of the University of Tennessee Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) is to provide a trained cadre of enterprise leaders – those who hold positions of responsibility for the overall institution’s performance and sustainability. The ELI desires to create capable enterprise leaders who successfully tackle the growing number of challenges or “wicked problems” facing higher education.

The ELI’s foundation is a substantive body of leadership theory and evidenced-based practices expressly focused at the executive level. The theoretical foundation is constructed around five enterprise imperatives that are the substance of the curriculum supported by six common core competencies that are the specific skills and mindsets desirable to be an exceptional leader for the university. All participants complete a 10-month program of study based on the five enterprise imperatives through a variety of means including six formal academy sessions and personalized executive coaching, as well as personalized consulting, targeted mentorships, and focused readings and textbooks. Each participant develops an individualized development plan as a tool for focusing and prioritizing the specific work they wish to pursue to become an effective enterprise leader.

The ELI operates on an annual cohort basis. Each year, candidates are selected to participate from across the University of Tennessee System. Selection for participation in the institute is made from nominees in concert with the nominee’s senior leader of their campus, institute or division. The program was initiated in 2018 with an Inaugural Class of 2019. The 2020 Class is the second cohort. More about the design and execution of the ELI can be found at: <https://president.tennessee.edu/executive-leadership-institute/>



University of Tennessee Executive Leadership Institute – Class of 2020

# Agile Leadership: Essential in Higher Education

Keith Barber, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

## Introduction and Problem Statement

On a regular basis, leaders in higher education face challenges such as budget constraints, personnel related-issues, and student concerns. These are in addition to demands for scheduled time to spend with alumni and donors, civic obligations, and faculty interaction. Today's collegiate leaders may also routinely encounter wicked problems like marketplace instabilities, constituent outcries, and crisis situations. Independently these can be all-consuming for a leader; together they have the potential to be disorientating and cause major confusion and setbacks for the entire institution. In today's era, leaders must be agile, as the agile leader is best suited to achieve consistent success within a university's integral and often-overlapping domains. This leader will not only thrive in the environment, but also implement a culture across campus that provides avenues for achievement throughout the organization.

## Description and Suggested Solutions

Historically, universities have sought leaders who are "seen as planners, directors, and controllers... [resulting in] authority based on rank. [Agile leadership, on the other hand,] 'is a direct result of the era in which we are living'" (De Smet, Lurie, & St. George, 2018). Technology, social change, efficiency, and the battle for customers (i.e., students) have forced organizations, including higher education institutions, to be nimble, and therefore, call for their leaders to be nimble. Agile leaders possess "the ability to take 'reflective action' – to step back from one's current focus, gain a broader, deeper perspective, then refocus and take action that is informed by this larger perspective" (Joiner, 2014).

While agile leaders possess the "core set of baseline behaviors" (De Smit, et.al, 2018) that are found in traditional leaders, it is their supplemental abilities that enable them to lead the organization in strategic and healthy ways. These leaders grasp the concept that "working smarter rather than harder [is key]...and it's about generating more value" within the organization, and not just more product or profit (Denning, 2018). De Smit, et.al. (2018), referencing the work of Robert Kegan, notes that agile leaders "must, above all, make a profound personal shift in their mind-sets from reactive to creative... [This perspective fosters] 'the culture of innovation, collaboration, and value creation'" throughout the entire organization. They further point out several key fundamental characteristics of agile leaders that shift the organization from a linear institution to one that not only is viable, but transformative. These tenets nurture the organization's ability to cultivate innovation, collaboration, and value creation.

## From certainty to discovery: Fostering Innovation

The agile leader in a university understands that in today's environment s/he must seek diversity of thought, embrace risk, and foster creative connections (De Smit, et.al., 2018). This leader is continually experimenting, testing, and learning. S/he builds innovation into the core of the institution's framework. Denning (2018) purports "The Law of the Small Team" is the best approach to achieve this. This includes the presumption that wicked problems must "be disaggregated into small batches and performed by small cross-functional autonomous teams working iteratively in short cycles in a state of flow, with fast feedback from customers and end-users" (Denning, 2018). The agile leader enables these teams by trusting them with the knowledge of the big picture, while also charging and enabling each to address a specific piece of the problem. We saw this occur with Apple, which generated the iPhone from inception to the consumer in just eighteen months, while its competitors had spent years (and millions) in unsuccessful attempts to do so under the traditional linear leadership model of product development (Denning, 2018). A University of Tennessee example occurs at the Institute of Agriculture's 4-H Education Center at Lone Oaks Farm where agile leaders have developed the WET Center to encourage research focused on water issues. Faculty from a multitude of departments from several UT campuses collaborate with professionals from federal, state, and local agencies to advance science education and environmental conservation around hydraulics, hydrology, erosion, and green infrastructure. In the past, this type of collaboration was not as acceptable, but with agile leaders in key UTIA positions, ideas collide and emerge across disciplines, resulting in adaptable practices applicable for a multitude of entities nationwide.

### **From authority to partnership: Fostering collaboration**

Traditional leaders practice in an aura of “superior to subordinate,” which begs the question throughout his/her organization of “who reports to whom?” (De Smet, et.al. 2018). Agile leaders embrace the ideal that people can learn from one another. They cultivate partnerships and collaborations that enable mutual respect as well as reciprocated acceptance. Agile leaders focus on “guiding and supporting rather than directing and micromanaging” (De Smet, et.al. 2018). These efforts thereby influence a culture of comfort and safety among others within the organization, which leads to creative environments, fosters diversity in problem solving, and provides for greater accountability and ownership across traditional thresholds. As Denning (2018) points out, the agile leader supports an atmosphere where employees “look beyond [his/her] own concerns and see [his/her] work as part of the larger mission.” He calls this the “Law of the Network” and notes corporate examples such as Spotify, Riot Games, and others that have thousands of individuals collaborating on large, multi-dimensional issues instead of working in hierarchal environments. This produces a multiplication effect of success for all involved parties. An example of this attribute at UT is the recent “re-unification” of UT-Knoxville and the UT Institute of Agriculture. Unintended consequences of separating the two campuses over fifty years ago (the original intent was to provide for a smoother administrative and budgetary model) included redundant services, compartmentalized faculty appointments, and caps on research dollar opportunities. Agile leadership sought to foster more collaboration between the campuses and the re-unification paved the way to remove barriers and build bridges (shared student services, faculty appointments, research partnerships). Agile leadership intent on nurturing relationships without consideration of boundaries made immediate impacts on both campuses.

### **From scarcity to abundance: Fostering value creation**

As De Smit, et.al. (2018) reference, traditional-type leaders seek to maximize their possessions (e.g., budgets, students, etc.) while agile leaders understand that a mindset of abundance produces better results. This perspective embraces win-win situations, leading to inclusion, entrepreneurship, and co-creation, and thereby providing value simultaneously to internal and external stakeholders. As Denny (2018) puts it, within “The Law of the Network,” each unit looks past its own goals and realizes its work is part of a larger mission. Turning again to Apple, we see an example of this characteristic. When the company launched iTunes (and successively the App Store), it opened doors for multitudes of partners that rely on one another “to co-create an unprecedented ecosystem...and thereby unlocked enormous demand and value potential” (De Smit, et.al. 2018). The UTIA/UTK reunification model again serves as another UT example of how agile leadership provides the roadmap for more (budget, student services, rankings, etc.) versus entities working to preserve and secure resources in silos.

### **Recommendations**

As we move forward in higher education, we need to more readily accept a change from the traditional paradigm of hiring leaders based primarily on their academic successes. When seeking to hire or place leaders within the academy, De Smet, et.al. (2018) provide a list of agile leadership characteristics that would prove beneficial for institutions to consider. We must seek the following:

- A leader who asks more questions versus offers his/her opinions
- A leader who sincerely listens, with focus on what he/she may be missing
- A leader who creates space for reflection
- A leader who takes ownership and responsibility for his/her domain
- A leader who constantly reviews and clarifies expectations
- A leader who identifies gaps and opportunities
- A leader who seeks to provide value in order to attract resources
- A leader who seeks collaboration in pursuit of a winning environment for all

Once this agile leader is in place, most universities will have to accept and adapt a reformation of change in culture – erase the lines on the box, act in unison for the betterment of all, and drive toward goals that produce value in holistic ways.

## Conclusion

Today's higher education leader must be accountable to multiple constituent bases, sort through diversions and pressures of all kinds, and perform miracle demands from a diversity of audiences, all in a 24/7 timeframe. These leaders have to be able to construct and implement visions in carrying out the university's mission while they also absorb ever-changing rules of the game (Petriglieri, G., 2020), multiple demands on time, and strenuous situations in full public view. Agile leadership is necessary for success in today's university setting and the leaders who possess this talent and are capable of implementing this approach find success for the individuals within the organization as well as for the organization itself.

As Joiner (2014) points out, "agile leadership, then, is not just another tool for a manager's tool kit. It is a core capacity, a 'meta-competency'...that affects how leaders deploy all their other competencies." Implementing agile leadership also increases employee satisfaction and productivity as well as constituent approval (Joiner, 2014). We can go from linear thinking boxes to multi-dimensional cultures with the ability to affect our campuses in un-paralleled ways. Agile leaders lead in ways that yield outward and forward-looking organizations, unleashing enormous potential for their institutions as well as each of its students, employees, and external partners.

While literature and executive coaches may provide a better understanding of agile leadership, the imperial question remains: Can agile leadership that is taught be implemented or, does a leader's psychological makeup, life experiences, and his/her surrounding climate provide the backbone for such a leadership style? Surely, these are key components for further study. No matter the answer, though, agile leadership is fundamental for success in today's university setting.

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Dr. Keith Barber has served thirty years in the Institutional Advancement arena where he seeks to assist others through higher education initiatives. As a first-generation college student who understands and appreciates the valuable lessons learned in – and out of – the classroom, Keith attended college on scholarships, making his career choice personally applicable. These traits, along with his work in the land grant system, his service as an executive officer of a national association, and his doctoral research, provide him with the foundation needed to practice the Circle of Life concept, a belief that holistic engagement is key to the success of students, faculty/staff, alumni/friends, and the institution.

Barber recognizes that gracious investors, supportive teammates, and great institutions contribute significantly to the value and quality of success found through higher education experiences. Keith is married to Stephanie Russ-Barber, M.D., and they have four children: Bennett, Laney Gracyn, Brooks, and Elizabeth Kathryn. Dr. Barber came to the University of Tennessee System in July 2012 and serves as the Vice Chancellor of Institutional Advancement for the UT Foundation, Inc. and the UT Institute of Agriculture.

# Effective Retention Strategies

Amy Belew, University of Tennessee at Martin

One of the largest and multifaceted challenges of higher education today is student retention. With a declining population leaving less students for enrollment and more states including retention and graduation rates in formula funding, effective retention strategies are more critical than ever. The need for additional investments, a variety of complex student issues, evolving student-parent relationships, and unorganized data have all contributed to ineffective retention strategies in the past. According to a paper published by Hanover Research Council in 2010 “Best Practices in Student Retention”, some of the most successful retention strategies were strategic-advising, orientation and first year seminars for freshmen, learning communities, summer bridge programs, and early warning systems (p.16). Moreover, when one or more of the strategies are implemented, the data shows there is an increase in retention effectiveness.

Georgia State University (GSU) instituted predictive analytics and more than 800 data-based alerts to track all undergraduate students daily. In conjunction with the early alerts, they created a structure of trained academic advisors to monitor and respond to the alerts with timely proactive advice to students (Renick, 2018, pp. 7-8). GSU instituted a summer success academy requiring at-risk freshmen to attend a 7-week summer session and pursue 7 college credit hours before fall classes. While doing this, they are immersed in learning communities, peer-mentoring, and mindset-building activities (Renick, 2018, pp. 9-10). GSU also launched a new portal to track the students’ requirements needing completion during the summer and installed an AI enhanced chatbot to reduce summer melt (Renick, 2018, pp. 13-14). The 6-year graduation rate increased by 7%, the 5-year graduation rate increased by 8%, and the 4-year graduation rate increased by 8% (Renick, 2018, p. 22). GSU improved advising, incorporated learning communities into summer bridge programs for at risk students and used predictive analytics to make great strides to increase graduation rates.

Another study held at Southern Utah University (SUU) saw a 7% increase in first year retention rates by including summer bridge activities in their orientation program and overhauling advising to include early warning systems (Carter, 2018). SUU improved freshmen orientation programs by grouping students together based on areas of interest. Students were contacted by campus staff and peer mentors throughout the summer to ensure their needs and requirements were met (Carter, 2018, p. 2). SUU revamped the university’s advising strategies to provide a holistic approach that includes academic, social, and emotional advising. Early alert systems were implemented to ensure the students needing help got it when it was needed (Carter, 2018, p. 3).

According to Hanover Research Council (2010), Grand View University (GVU) incorporated living learning communities for freshmen to promote high-quality student/instructor and student/advisor relationships (p. 22). GVU implemented an early alert system for student support to intervene with at risk students through a case management approach (p. 24). With these changes, GVU improved first year retention rates by 7.3%, freshmen to junior retention rates by 7%, and 5-year graduation rates by 4.9% (p. 26).

The University of South Alabama (USA) participated in the Education Advisory Board Student Success Challenge (SSC), which yielded an increase in first-year retention rate by 12% (Scaling Student Care, 2018, p. 7). The SSC approach uses intelligent analytics to segment risk and identify target populations. A coordinated care team between students and support offices makes the experience for the students more efficient and gratifying. As part of the SSC, the university made investments in advising technology using communication and tracking tools. This enabled USA to identify and resolve minor problems before they became big issues and was key to minimizing the number of problems escalated. Executive dashboards were used to track the leading indicators of success metrics that are integral to overall progress, so they know when and if modifications are needed (Scaling Student Care, 2018, p.8).

In all of these cases, data analytics is a key factor in the success of their investments. Enterprise leaders must first decide on what key leading indicators will be a baseline measure for success and what data will be used for proactive alerts. Dynamic, useful, and easy-to-read dashboards are critical to measuring outcomes. The culture of the university should be ready and willing to make changes to ineffective and outdated

processes. Without buy-in from the campus community, student data will be overlooked and will leave your student population vulnerable. The correct student population must be targeted for each performance indicator and the processes that will be used. Once the key performance indicators have been identified, the processes can be put in place to create a positive outcome measurement.

Each higher education institution should consider their at-risk populations to determine the best use and combination of these strategies for their institution. Some of the institutions implemented other strategies based on their at-risk populations. Georgia State University implemented mini grants and a financial services center that incorporated early alerts and monitoring (Renick, 2018, pp.10-15). Southern Utah University had resources that were designed around building relationships and offering opportunities for students to become engaged with the university including peer mentoring to help students connect with SUU (Carter, 2018, pp. 2-3).

Strategic advising, orientation and first year seminars for freshmen, learning communities, summer bridge programs, and early warning systems are all effective components of retention strategy that have proven successful. Whether they are used alone or in combination, they help to improve retention for higher education institutions. This allows for a proactive approach with at-risk students using predictive analytics or early alerts eliminating small issues before they become insurmountable. With the consistent proactive monitoring, some universities have also reported a decrease in major changes which ensures fewer wasted credit hours and decreases the amount of time a student takes to graduate. These programs provide the student with a more enhanced and overall positive experience. In the end, our goal is student success - the core mission of higher education. For retention, a proactive strategy instead of reactive allows problems to be mitigated now instead of the future. It has also been proven to work effectively to reduce the wasting of present opportunities with valued students.

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Amy Belew is the Chief Information Officer at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Amy first joined the UT Martin family in 2000 as a systems analyst. She then served as an IT Administrator until 2012 before moving into a role as Interim Assistant Chief Information Officer and Interim Director of systems administration and infrastructure, academic computing, security, video network, applications development and operations.

In 2016, Amy assumed the role of Interim Chief Information Officer which she held until May 2018 when she became the Chief Information Officer. Prior to joining UT Martin, Amy worked at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center as a Systems Analyst.

She earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Tennessee at Martin.

# The Importance of Data Governance in Higher Education

Michael Carter, University of Tennessee Foundation

## What is Data Governance and why is it important to enterprise leaders?

Data governance allows institutions to establish protocols and guidelines about how data is collected, managed, shared, accessed, and used. It provides transparency, accuracy, security, accessibility, and consistency of information that will assist campus leaders in making strategic decisions that will impact the future of their institutions. These strategic decisions are centered on operational effectiveness, data quality, data integration, data security, and key performance indicators such as retention and graduation rates.

## Why has Data Governance been so difficult to solve in Higher Education?

Institutions of Higher Education have a plethora of resources that make up the vast network of their data ecosystem. Student Records, Financial Aid, Alumni, Housing, Payroll, Human Resources, Research, and Athletics all house their big data. They store and use multiple on-premise and cloud-based database systems that are specifically for their needs, and with most institutions, the biggest problem is that these departments work in silos without a structured, comprehensive approach that enables each system to “talk” with the others. Getting everyone to agree on how we can share data and still work autonomously has been a challenge. For some institutions, data governance is not a priority because there has “never been a problem,” so they see no need to allocate resources to a problem that does not exist. In other instances, data governance can be difficult to measure and show an immediate ROI, which causes budget resources to be shifted to other priorities.

## What Impact can Data Governance have on Higher Education?

### *Student Success*

Institutions are in the business of educating and graduating students. Retention and graduation rates are key performance indicators for administrators, and data governance plays an important role in capturing, analyzing, and reporting on data that are used to measure these rates. This data, which must be collected from various sources across the university, can help answer a multitude of questions from who are the students that we are losing to what can be done to keep them and eventually graduate. Having accurate data allows administrators to make the necessary adjustments and to increase resources where needed.

For example, a co-curricular transcript contains data regarding student activities outside the classroom, such as leadership, volunteer activities, study abroad experience, internships, and research. Having the right data governance infrastructure in place allows for efficient and accurate collection of this data to support the various departments that guide students as they progress through these programs and prepare them for the workforce. Data collected by the programs is consistently analyzed and drives decisions to add/remove programs as needed for future students.

### *Operational Effectiveness*

Institutional leaders are continuously stretched to the limits to do more with less and are looking for efficient solutions. Ellucian software conducted a survey of 200 higher education leaders, including presidents, provosts, CFOs, CIOs, and CTOs between January and March 2018. Of the respondents, 58 percent said institutional analytics that enhance operational efficiency are of greater value than learning analytics that enhance academic performance. (Ellucian Software, 2018). As budgets continue to dwindle it is more important for institutional leaders to have access to data to make critical decisions to improve efficiencies and increase cost savings. Whether it's implementing IT infrastructure to support online classes, providing real-time data from meters and sensors, optimizing energy usage and identifying problem areas and buildings, or implementing electronic ticketing systems to athletic events, it is important to have the right data governance protocols to eliminate redundancies, avoid waste, create less painful user experiences, and save more resources for the primary missions of the institution: teaching, research, and service.

### *Improve Data Quality*

In my thirty-five years in the Information Technology world, the one phrase that never gets old is “garbage in, garbage out.” Data governance provides an opportunity for institutions to take a deep dive and assess their data ecosystem, identify bottlenecks, and implement the protocols and systems necessary to collect, sanitize,

and maintain the data that will lead to accuracy, transparency, and consistency. Data governance guidelines should always align with institutional goals and priorities.

### *Eliminate Silos and Better Coordinate Data*

Most institutional data are maintained in separate databases with proprietary platforms that create challenges such as data integrity, redundancy, and inefficiencies when trying to gather critical information for senior leadership. Data governance will lead to a needs assessment that will focus on evaluating various options from establishing a data warehouse to purchasing an integrated solution so that data can efficiently “talk” to each other.

### *Introduce or Enhance Business Intelligence and Data Analytics*

Universities have hundreds of millions of individual bits of data about their key constituents, but it’s of little use if we can’t translate it into actionable intelligence. For data to be effective and actionable, an infrastructure has to be developed to deliver on-demand and updated visualization charts. Building the right infrastructure to store all this data (data warehouse) and having business intelligence resources to retrieve, analyze, and report is vital for leadership to clearly understand various trends and key metrics that institutions are measured on. Also, that infrastructure should include the ability to generate predictive models that can be used by administrators to answer questions like:

- What is the incoming class size and how much financial aid will be needed?
- How much enrollment growth do we anticipate in the next five to ten years?
- Which students may in trouble to graduate?
- What is the likelihood that a donor will be able to make a major gift to the University?

### *Mitigating Risk*

With the plethora of data that is available, and as organizations move to majority online platforms, institutions must have the right infrastructure in place to adhere to laws like HIPPA, FERPA, GDPR, PCI, and NCAA. Data governance focuses on protecting personally identifiable information and preventing data from getting in the wrong hands, not only from University employees but more importantly unscrupulous individuals outside of the institution.

### **How to get started**

First and foremost is to recognize who should be involved/responsible for data governance. I have posed this question to various colleagues, and the majority of responses I received were the Campus Information Technology Department. However, it is important to note that individuals at every level must participate in the development of a data governance program. Kelly Briner, Director of Data Governance at Arizona State, stated, "Data governance must include ongoing collaboration between all stakeholders, it's not just about IT, so it can't be an IT initiative. It has to be a total university initiative." (Hayhurst, 2019). Below, I have outlined some solutions that are critical to establishing a data governance program.

### *Support from Senior Leadership*

Senior leadership must understand the impact data governance has on university initiatives. This does not necessarily have to be at the President/Chancellor level but those who report to them and who can make governance a priority. Data governance will have budget implications and can involve a lot of resources, which at times can hinder governance initiatives, especially in a decentralized institution. “Due to the siloed history most enterprises share, convincing these stakeholders of the need for – and value of – a holistic data strategy is presumably the most difficult challenge they face. Data strategy and governance must be closely aligned with the enterprise and digitalization strategy, and with an overarching view of business processes” (The Business Application Research Center (BARC), n.d.).

### *Chief Data Officer*

I mentioned above that everyone needs to be involved in data governance. However, someone at a senior level must oversee the data operations like a data evangelist. One area that this position will initially focus on is identifying the different data sources within the institution, especially critical data that major stakeholders need

access to, and identifying what processes are currently in place to store, collect, secure, maintain, and share data. Also, an institution must have a data strategy, as well as the tools to collect, organize, and visualize the appropriate data for institutional decision making. The CDO's role is to manage all of these tasks and engage in "data storytelling" on issues of importance to those stakeholders. In working horizontally across campus units and vertically through the institutional hierarchy, the CDO could expose politically sensitive issues (Pomerantz, 2017).

### *Data Governance Committee*

Institutions must establish a structure with a diverse group of stakeholders that represents multiple departments within the institution, particularly Student Records, Financial Aid, Alumni, Housing, Payroll, Human Resources, Research, and Athletics. First and foremost this committee must establish a vision and objectives. For example, a few of Vanderbilt University's committee objectives are:

- Improve the security of the data, including confidentiality and protection from loss.
  - Improve the integrity of the data, resulting in greater accuracy, timeliness, and quality of information for decision-making.
  - Establish standard definitions for key institutional data to promote data integrity and consistency.
- (Vanderbilt University, 2020)

The committee will also be responsible for setting short- and long-term goals, recommending key performance indicators, and assessing data sources, processes, security, standards, policies, training, and communication.

### *Staff Awareness and Training*

Employees and end-users play an important role in the success of a data governance program. Continuous training will be necessary for every employee who interacts with institutional data. Everyone must understand the importance of data, its impact on university initiatives, and their responsibilities on how data is accessed, shared, maintained, and secured based on the institution's data governance standards and processes. This training should be included with compliance (HIPPA, PCI) and system security training that employees are required to complete on an annual basis.

### **Summary**

Big data keeps getting bigger, as we have seen with social networking adding another dimension to our data ecosystem. Implementing a data governance program now is more about adapting to tomorrow's data needs. Every day we wait to decide on data governance is another day that we fall behind. As the volume of data sources increases, along with the need for leadership to access accurate data to make strategic decisions, institutions must develop infrastructure or enhance current standards and processes that will adapt to the ever-changing data landscape. Leaders must recognize the impact that data governance can have on institutional priorities and not fall into the trap of being reactive only when data crises occur.

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*Tom Scarlett*, Senior Engineer  
University of Connecticut

*Darren Hughes*, Director of User Services  
University of Tennessee Foundation



Michael O. Carter has served in multiple roles during his 28 years at the University of Tennessee. In his current capacity as Assistant Vice President of Advancement Services for the UT Foundation, he manages a team of 32 people in six departments: Alumni and Donor Records, Business Intelligence, User Services, Enterprise Systems, Prospect Management and Research, and Online Engagement.

As a leader, Michael's priorities include strategic planning, and implementing and maintaining cost-effective, high-performance emerging solutions that support the University's philanthropic goals and priorities. Since being named Assistant Vice President in 2014, he has worked to cultivate a culture of accountability, transparency, consistency, efficiency, and accuracy among his staff.

Prior to joining the UT Foundation, Michael worked for more than a decade in the Office of Information Technology, focusing on desktop and web-based applications, and was one of the leads in launching electronic commerce solutions at UT Knoxville. Michael holds a BSBA in Computer Information Systems and an MBA from Western Carolina University.

# The Role of Student Life in Student Success: Where are We Now, Where Do We Need to Be, and How do We Get There?

Steve Catlett, University of Tennessee at Knoxville

## Introduction

Student success is measured in many different ways and there are a variety of opinions on which are the key measures of success. Most commonly referenced are metrics such as retention rate, persistence rate, graduation rate, time to degree completion, career outcomes rate and academic performance.

This paper will focus on three key metrics: Retention rate, Graduation rate and Career Outcomes rate. Retention rate is defined as the percentage of students that return to campus from year one to year two. Graduation rate refers to the percent of students who graduate within a six-year time frame after starting their college journey. The Career Outcomes rate refers to the percent of students employed full time, are in graduate school, military service, or participate in a voluntary service organization following graduation. (National Association of Colleges and Employers – NACE).

Research shows that a student's college experience improves significantly as they are engaged in activities and programs outside the classroom. Higher levels of retention, improved social skills, development of leadership skills, increased self-confidence, and the ability to build a personal network are several of the key outcomes from student engagement. We also know that as engagement increases, it builds a stronger sense of community. All these factors increase the chances that a student matriculates through the university in a timely fashion.

## The Problem: How Do we Know Which Student Life Experiences Best Enhance Student Success at various institutions of higher education?

In public higher education, our role is to produce graduates that are qualified to take on the problems of our cities, states, nation and world. A highly educated populace can deliver on this need but a major effort to increase retention, graduation rates and career outcomes is required.

We know there is a connection between Student Life initiatives and Success. The problem remains, however, that while strides have been made in key student success metrics, the majority of institutions are still not at the levels they need to be.

To tackle this problem, those of us in higher education need to ask ourselves three key questions:

- A. Where are we now?
- B. Where do we want to be?
- C. Are there specific programs or initiatives within Student Life that can close the gap?

### *Where are we now?*

The average six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduates at public U.S. institutions in 2018 (cohort entry year of 2012) was still only at 62% National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Seven years earlier (cohort entry year of 2005), the six-year graduation rate was at only 57%.

In 2018, we also saw a robust job market with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reporting an 85.7% outcomes rate for bachelor's degree graduates, an all-time high in the five years since NACE has conducted the survey among its member institutions.

In looking at retention rates, for the 2010 year at public 4-year institutions the national average was 79% while seven years later that number had only risen to 81% in 2017-2018 (NCES).

### *Where do we want to be?*

Our institutions should strive to serve the public, produce high-level graduates that are employable and that can go to make a difference in our world. They should produce alumni that become builders of our society, contributing to the education, cultural diversity and business success of the cities, states and nations of the world.

In order to prepare students to achieve these lofty goals, students should be retained and graduate at a higher level than they currently do. If one looks at institutions who rate at high levels according to *U.S. News*, an aspirational goal for retention should be at 90 percent or higher, and aspirational graduation rates goals of 80% or higher should be set.

*Are there specific programs or initiatives within Student Life that can close the gap?*

A review of research from a variety of sources such as *Inside Higher Ed*, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the US Department of Education, the National Association of Colleges and Employers, as well as interviews with student affairs professionals at several institutions indicates the answer is “yes.” But which ones work and for what institutions?

## **Methodology & Findings**

From practically every source reviewed and person interviewed, emphasis was placed on the importance of building connections. “Student Life connections lead to engagement, which leads to a sense of community” says Stan Henderson, retired VP of Student Affairs at the University of Michigan Dearborn. It is this sense of community that increases the chance of success, from retention, to graduation, to career outcomes.

- A. Resources uncovered and interviews with student life professionals both indicated that high-level and extended engagement with students from the beginning is one of the key components to increasing student success. Building this sense of community starts before a student arrives on campus. Enrollment management can begin to make a soon-to-be student feel welcome. As Student Life takes over this role, orientation and enhanced onboarding can provide students with the support and services the need to succeed (*Inside Higher Ed*).
- B. Learning communities often involve a partnership between Student Life and Academic Affairs, bringing together like minded students in a residential setting. The most successful ones are those with “committed leadership, engaged faculty and a well-planned schedule of activities” (*Inside Higher Ed*). A robust learning community not only houses students together who have common academic interests, they often hold classes in the residence halls. Well executed learning communities have the ability to improve academic success, retention rates and student satisfaction.
- C. Co-curricular programs, in addition to the traditional extra-curricular programs, have a positive impact on student success (*Inside Higher Ed*). The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has created a Co-Curricular Transcript (CCT) that is maintained by the Center for Student Engagement within the Division of Student Life. All experiences that are included on the CCT receive final approval by the Center. Students are able to include activities spanning the Five Volunteer Experiences on their CCT. These areas include: Leadership Experiences, Service Experiences, International Education Experiences, Professional or Applied Experiences and Undergraduate Research Experiences. The benefits from co-curricular experiences are multifold, including higher retention, persistence, academic success and personal outcomes like increased self-esteem and motivation for learning (UTK CC Benefits).
- D. According to student life professionals with whom I spoke, students who participate in highly engaged activities succeed at a higher rate than those students who do not participate. In particular, student organizations such as fraternities and sororities play a major role in student success. Measurements of retention, graduation rate and career placement are measured and, overall, are higher for a variety of reasons. Many of these organizations have GPA requirements of their members so academic success is promoted and encouraged. These programs provide leadership opportunities, confidence-building, and social skills which make students more marketable when companies recruit on campus. Moreover, those who participate in these types of activities tend to have deeper connections to the institution long after graduation.

- E. Students who study abroad experience higher success than students who do not. At Syracuse University, about 50% of their student body participates in a study abroad program, and their graduation rate for those students is 82% (College Scorecard). Study abroad participants develop independent skills and build experiences beyond the regular classroom experience. “Study abroad is associated with improved completion and retention rates, academic achievement and the acquisition of skills that employers value” (Inside Higher Ed - Insight).
- F. Steven Mintz, Senior Advisor to the President of Hunter College, shares that other key elements can move the needle. Institutions need to provide early exposure to career planning, expand access to experiential learning activities and increase support services for students. Also, removing institutional obstacles that serve as serious hurdles to student success are important.
- G. The University of Arizona’s Student Engagement and Career Development Center has a program they call “100% Engagement.” It offers intense interaction in three areas: Engagement Activities, Competencies, and Skills (AZ Engagement). “The set of skills that students develop through their engagement activities and competencies rests at the heart of the 100% Engagement initiative. These skills help students translate their experience and apply it in a meaningful way to their personal and professional goals. A unique combination of these skills make UA graduates among the most employable in the world,” according to the Global Employability Survey.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

While effective programs exist, there does not appear to be any silver bullet to increasing student success. Real growth in student success metrics will take a commitment by institutions across multiple units such as Student Life, Academic Affairs, and Enrolment Management, among others. Programs that create highly engaged students have the best chance for success in the long run.

On-going study needs to occur to measure the effectiveness of these newly integrated programs on student success but there is great optimism among student life personnel that these programs will be successful over time.

Meanwhile, institutions should consider undertake the following:

1. Develop an inventory of successful, high-impact programs implemented at institutions across the country.
2. Analyze the programs to determine which show the most promise for their particular institution, that fit the mission, and are within the institution’s financial resources to provide.
3. The programs that seem to have the best fit should be prioritized, and the institutions should choose one or more in which to invest.
4. The programs should take high priority across the institutions, and they should be integral to the campus strategic plan.
5. Once a program is begun, meticulous data should be kept to determine the outcomes the institution has chosen to measure (retention, graduation, career outcomes, etc.).
6. Each year, these outcomes should be studied to determine if they are effective. Necessary modifications should be made if appropriate.

Taking steps to really improve student success measures will take increased commitment at the enterprise level. However, the result of higher levels of student success has many benefits, including enhanced national reputation, increased admissions demand, and additional funding possibilities among other positive outcomes.

“To achieve a goal you have never achieved before, you must start doing things you have never done before.”  
– Jim Stuart, The 4 Disciplines of Execution

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Steve Catlett has over twenty-five years in the University Advancement industry with experience in alumni relations and development. He manages a development team focused on key central areas within the university as well as the regional team.

Steve began his career in Advancement in 1992 as Director of Alumni Programs at the University of Tennessee where he worked with alumni chapters across the US. In 2006 Steve accepted the position of Associate Vice Chancellor of Alumni Affairs heading up alumni efforts for the flagship campus of The University of Tennessee in Knoxville. During his tenure he implemented new programs focused around targeted alumni segments, oversaw major growth in staffing and budgeting, established the Alumni Board of Directors and the Alumni Awards program.

In August 2012, he was appointed to his current position as Associate Vice Chancellor for Advancement. In this role, Steve and his team are responsible for all non-college based fundraising programs, management of the regional fundraising team and international fundraising.

Steve has been nationally involved in the Advancement professional organization known as CASE (Council and Support of Education), holding leadership positions in the Southeast District and speaking at numerous conferences.

# Transitioning from Classroom to Online Teaching in the Age of COVID-19: A Proposed Strategy

Mojdeh Dehghan, University of Tennessee Health Science Center

## Introduction:

The events of COVID-19 have been some of the most challenging and unprecedented for higher education in the recent years. As the nature of this health pandemic required social distancing, in person classes quickly became impossible and it was necessary to continue classes online and conduct many administrative responsibilities and meetings remotely. Faculty were faced with having a few days to prepare for online lectures, quizzes and navigate methods of monitoring students during their remote testing. According to Wentling et al. (2000), e-learning can be seen as the acquisition and use of knowledge distributed and facilitated primarily by electronic means.<sup>1</sup> In order for any institution to transition from in person teaching to online learning requires a fundamental change in three main categories, infrastructure, faculty development, and continuous e-learning supportive services for staff and administration.<sup>2</sup>

## Problem:

Most universities prior to COVID-19 relied heavily on in-person teaching and learning models with a small portion of the courses offered online. This is especially true of the health sciences as many of the courses offered in these campuses are hands on and based on skill learning. After COVID-19 most higher education institutions were faced with the challenge of making this transition immediately in the best way possible. This crisis challenged many universities' technology infrastructure, need for faculty development, and the need for continuous e-learning supportive services.

Universities have been faced with the significant financial obligation of completely transitioning to e-learning. Prior to COVID-19, many university administrators were resistant to offer their primary academic programs online. This crisis forced millions of faculty and students to be incredibly reliant on hastily formed online academic environments. Goldie Blumenstyk, at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, suggested that the coronavirus could be a "black swan" moment " , that could act as a catalyst to help universities accelerate their transition from traditional class room instructions to completely an online curriculum.<sup>3,4</sup> Many faculty did not have the adequate training or experience to properly adjust to this particular transition. The challenge for universities around the world becomes how to improve the quality of online teaching and adequately train their faculty. Despite the unfortunate nature of the current circumstances, this moment may serve as an opportunity to accelerate the incorporation of emerging technology into currently held learning models and as a result enhance the effectiveness of our educational systems, or if improperly addressed, could be a significant impediment to optimal educational outcomes.

[http://www.onderwijskunde.ugent.be/en/abstract\\_Collaborative-learning-in-asynchronous.htm](http://www.onderwijskunde.ugent.be/en/abstract_Collaborative-learning-in-asynchronous.htm)

## Suggested Solutions:

One of the solutions to the current crisis and the need to transition to online teaching is to strengthen the infrastructure of our college campuses. This could be the most financially costly step that provides the necessary equipment and technology. The second element in implementing effective e-learning is faculty development, and training. Benson and Palaskas (2006) used the RIPPLE as a framework to study the adaptation of online learning and found the level of faculty training and development to be key in the success of an online teaching model. The third and most important element of online learning is providing supportive services for faculty and staff. This becomes extremely important at times of crisis and rapid development as regardless of the infrastructure or faculty's initial training, lack of continuous supportive service can paralyze the progress of online teaching. At the College of Dentistry with over 40 courses being taught in-person, this rapid transition was only possible with the help of the information technology department that provided continuous support to faculty, staff and students. As Bates (2005) wrote, any educational technology is not intrinsically ideal or dismal, but always dependent on how well the organization is able to implement and maintain it.<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/03/18/most-teaching-going-remote-will-help-or-hurt-online-learning>

The manner in which each institution's leadership deals with this crisis will determine the future survival of that organization. Institutions that have previously invested in technology training development and design will be in a much better position, according to Deb Adair, executive director of quality matters. "Universities with a more extensive disaster preparedness plan will have the least amount of disruption to their campus operation", according to Dr. Michael Horn author of Choosing College (2019, Jossey Bass).

University administrators and leaders need to use this opportunity to invest in their infrastructure and the training and education of their faculty. Initially during the crisis, some institutions opted to purchase high end online courses and curriculum from reputable online institutions. As the crisis stabilizes universities need to spend time, energy and funds to develop their own personalized hybrid educational programs. These hybrid curriculums can combine the best in-person and online teaching and technology and at the same time provide a more flexible schedule and learning environment for their students. Research foundations like the University of Tennessee Research Foundation can provide grants and competitions for student and faculty entrepreneurs and provide them with opportunities to developed ed-tech companies within the university. These ed-tech companies can support faculty and students on their online efforts. The campus communities need to learn from this recent COVID experiment and gather feedback from students and faculty in order to implement policies to help in managing future crisis. This new generation of students have higher technology capabilities and could be the drivers of the success for this hybrid educational model.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90470689/schools-are-preparing-for-coronavirus-quarantines-by-figuring-out-remote-learning-solutions>

#### **Recommended Implementations:**

- 1. Create a solid Infrastructure for on-line Education:** Universities initially need to provide their faculty, students and staff the hardware and software and necessary equipment to make online teaching possible. Computer lending or discounted laptops for students and staff with financial constraints will make online teaching accessible to all.  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/05/20/how-turn-springs-remote-courses-high-quality-online-courses-fall-opinion>
- 2. Provide Faculty, Staff and Student Training and Development in online teaching:** Before the COVID-19 crisis many of our faculty used traditional in-person teaching models and were not comfortable or knowledgeable with the skills to effectively teach students remotely. We have to make sure the knowledge and skills necessary are emphasized and implemented in our faculty training and considered a necessary skill.
- 3. Provide e-Learning Supportive Services:** This becomes extremely important at times of crisis and rapid development as regardless of the infrastructure or faculty's initial training, lack of continuous supportive service can paralyze the progress of on-line teaching
- 4. Cultural Transition to Online Education:** Traditional in-person education constitutes the educational background and experience of overwhelming majority of faculty in all academic fields. Transition to the online pedagogy not only involves adoption of new technologies, but also acquiring a more innovative and flexible educational culture. Adaptation to the new culture calls for various supportive task forces and educational programs for faculty, students and staff.
- 5. Alignment and Coordination of Online Degree Programs within the UT System:** Various degree programs can be offered state-wide via multi-campus aligned and coordinated curriculum. This strategy allows various institutions within the state to schedule and offer multiple sections of a course with similar pedagogy. However, students have the flexibility to enroll in any of the offered sections, as long as the capacity allows. This allows students to complete a degree program by taking the required courses offered by institutions within the UT system rather than their host institution. This system wide coordination reduces resource duplication; saves costs; and offers a higher degree of flexibility to the traditional and non-traditional students toward maintaining the necessary balance between job and education.

## Conclusion:

More than 400 million students faced disruption of their education as a result of the COVID- 19 Pandemic. The institutions that had the more extensive crisis prevention training and strategies and a stronger technology infrastructure were best prepared and less negatively affected by the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Looking to the future, insuring success for academic institutions will require further investment in the technology infrastructure, faculty development and ongoing e-learning supportive systems, cultural transition to online education and alignment and coordination of online degrees with in their university system to insure their success. To bridge the gap between in-person and online learning will also require cooperation among different institutions and universities in order to cut costs and optimize resources.

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Dr. Mojdeh Dehghan is currently an *Associate Professor, and Interim Chair* of the General Dentistry Department, at the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry, with over 25 years of private practice experience. Dr. Dehghan has held several national leadership positions including the *Board of Directors for the American Association of Women Dentists (2017-2018)*, the AAWD representative for the American Dental Association Diversity and Inclusion Committee (2016-2018), and the *University Relations Committee of the American Association of Cosmetic Dentistry (2014-2016)*.

Her research interests include, Dental Erosion, Dental Technology and CAD/CAM Dentistry, and is the recipient of several national research awards. The results of her research have been published in professional journals including the *Journal of General Dentistry, Journal of Cosmetic Dentistry, Journal of Dental Education, Journal of Dental Research* and *Inside Dentistry*.

She is a dental consultant for rehabilitation and treatment centers for patients with Eating Disorders, and a frequent continuing education presenter for Dentists and Dental Hygienist at local and national dental association meetings.

# Financial Sustainability in Higher Education

Michael Ebbs, University of Tennessee Health Science Center

## Introduction

A sad milestone occurred in Memphis, Tennessee, on May 09, 2020. The Memphis Institute of Art (MIA) held its final commencement on this date after 84 years of operation. The event came as no surprise as the closure announcement came nearly three years earlier in October 2017 (1). The cited reasons included declining student enrollments, high debt, and a lack of a long-term plan for financial viability (1). Unfortunately, this is not a new trend in higher education. A search on the Chronicle of Higher Education, College Closure database 2014-2018, identified 140 private nonprofit and public institutions that have closed (2). In some of these closures, other Universities acquired some or all of their academic operations; nevertheless, they have ceased as an independent institution.

Financial sustainability in higher education has received a lot of attention this past decade. Harvard business professor Clayton Christensen made headlines in 2017 when he publicly stated that 50 percent of colleges and universities could go bankrupt in the 10-15 years (3). Although many other experts tend to disagree with prediction, disruptions to the higher education business model will continue and might even accelerate due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of decreased demand due to demographic changes, shaky university finances, less than a clear return on investment for incoming students, and shifts in learning preferences for students are some of the factors that enterprise leaders in higher education will need to understand to maintain the financial viability of their institutions. The review of this topic will examine financial sustainability at traditional public and private, nonprofit institutions.

## Demographic Challenges

The pool of graduating high school seniors is beginning to decline. In his book, Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education, the author, Nathan Grawe, predicts that in certain regions of the country, Northeast and Midwest will lose close to 5 percent of their college-aged population by the mid-2020s (4). Furthermore, Grawe argues that starting in 2026, the number of college-aged students will drop by 15% over five years. Grawe also predicts that impact will be variable by institution type. He theorizes that elite institutions will weather the storm fine, but the smaller private schools and regional public schools will be under the most pressure.

An example of these challenges is evident in the state of Illinois. College enrollment at public institutions was more than 930,000 students in 2010 to approximately 765,000 in 2017 (5). The demographic impact partly contributes as well as a 12 percent increase of Illinois high school graduates choosing to go out of state (5). The duality of the situation is very evident. The flagship institution, University of Illinois, topped 50,000 students for the very first time during this time.

However, some public regional universities have continued to struggle. Southern Illinois University (SIU) continues a decade's long decline in enrollment. SIU recorded 11,695 students in Fall 2019, which represents 43% fewer students when compared to 2009 (5). The decreases over the past three fiscal years were 8.5%, 7.5%, and 13.6% (6). Another regional public university that has struggled is Western Illinois University (WIU). WIU has lost several hundred students starting in 2015 and has faced double-digit enrollment declines the past two years (5).

The reaction to enrollment declines for some universities has been to increase international enrollment. However, even this source of students is under pressure. First, the current presidential administration has reversed policies that make student visas harder to obtain, especially for Chinese students and a growing international perception that the United States is more unwelcoming than in previous times (7). Because of these realities, the past two years have shown a decline in new international enrollees (7).

## Possible Solutions

**Reshape your view.** One possible solution is to look at underrepresented students, including students of color, low-income students, and students from rural areas. One University has established several initiatives for rural students. North Carolina State University (NC State) has developed a series of programs for students from rural areas. They have focused student orientations, tutoring, and support services for rural students whose high schools lacked specific academic resources (8). Furthermore, NC State created a program called Rural Works! The focus of this program is to place students in paid eight-week internships in rural communities (8). Most of the participants in this program are from rural areas. The details of the Rural Works! program can be found at <https://ruralworks.dasa.ncsu.edu>.

UNC-Greensboro has focused on African-American students and first-generation students. Over time, UNC-Greensboro has become one of the most diverse institutions in the state of North Carolina. Approximately 45 percent of the undergraduates are members of a minority group, and nearly percent is African-American (9). Furthermore, the share of UNC-Greensboro students that are Pell-eligible has risen to 44 percent from 32 percent ten years ago, and nearly one-third of the incoming freshman class are the first to go to college in their family (9). The progress that has been made is astounding, given the fact that UNC-Greensboro was forced to integrate by court order in the 1950s. A major contributing factor to the success of UNC Greensboro is support services for these students and their efforts to increase retention.

**Bigger not always better.** In a bold move, George Washington University (GW) announced in the summer of 2019 that they would cut undergraduate student enrollment by 20 percent over the next five years (10). This decision is certainly an outlier against the conventional wisdom, where schools are trying to increase or just maintain enrollment. GW stated that they are focusing more on creating a unique student experience, rather than enrollment growth. By reducing enrollment, GW will be able to maintain its reputation of selectivity, which has dipped over the past five years due to increased enrollment (10). In concert with planned enrollment declines, the University intends to focus on STEM-related subjects, which will have a broader appeal to prospective students. Of course, one size does not fit all, and GW is in a better position than other institutions to pursue this strategy. However, targeted reductions in enrollment in certain colleges or program elimination for underperforming majors can make sense if done strategically.

## Financial Risk Factors

A recent study of EY-Parthenon identified several risk factors that are predictive of whether a college faces challenges as a going concern. Some of the factors that were identified are: 1) No online programs; (2) tuition discount rate higher than 35%; (3) debt payments greater than 10 percent; (4) deficit spending; (5) enrollment under 1,000 students; (6) tuition increases greater than 8 percent and (7) dependency of 85 percent or more on tuition. (11). In this particular study, 122 institutions exhibited four or more of the risk factors (11).

The tuition discount rate is a metric that is closely watched at private institutions. A discount rate is the percentage of revenue from tuition and fees that is awarded to students in grants and scholarships. In a recent study, the average tuition-discount rates for the 2018-2019 academic year were estimated to 52 percent for incoming freshmen and 46.3 percent for all undergraduates (12). These numbers represent record high discounting rates. The more troubling fact is as tuition has increased at private institutions, so has the discount rate. Therefore, one must consider if tuition discounting at this rate is sustainable.

## Possible Solutions

**Consider Strategic Partnerships/Mergers.** If an institution faces multiple risk factors, a merger or partnership might be considered. A review of two private colleges in Philadelphia offers some lessons (13). Thomas Jefferson University (TJU) and Philadelphia University (PU) merged in 2017. For some people, the merger of these schools seemed to be out of place. TJU was a health science based university with a medical school and PU was a design-oriented professional school. Some of the takeaways from people involved with the merger are:

- Look for synergistic partners. The pre-merger institutions were roughly the same in size but only had a couple of academic programs in common (13). Therefore, after the merger, they created more educational value – with majors from both institutions – and had the needed staffing in place.
- Focus on differentiation. As mentioned in the George Washington example earlier, find areas that will separate your institution from the pack. Colleges that fail to deliver in this regard will be the first ones to fail.
- Communicate early and often. Frequent communication with faculty, staff, and students are essential. Furthermore, don't forget about donors, industry partners, and elected officials in the communications (13). The goal of communication is to establish the buy-in of all those involved and to create trust.

Even if a full-blown merger is not warranted, consider other options such as joint programs, collaborative projects, and shared resources. Some examples include:

- The Keck Science Department is shared among three colleges of the Claremont Consortium – Claremont McKenna, Pitzer, and Scripps. This shared arrangement has allowed access to faculty and majors that none of the institutions could have provided individually. For more information regarding the Keck Science department can be found at <https://www.kecksci.claremont.edu>.
- The Three College Collaboration is a joint agreement between Babson, Olin, and Wellesley Colleges. From Oberlin's website, the collaboration increases the academic offerings available to Olin students in several areas, including the natural and mathematical sciences, social sciences, and business. More details can be found at <https://www.bow3colleges.org>. Another example is the eleven liberal arts college Pennsylvania Consortium of Liberal Arts with more information located at <https://www.pcla.info>.
- Collaboration is not just applicable to private institutions. In 2015, the University of Maine system faced, with a potential \$90M budget shortfall within five years, that the only way to keep operating seven campuses statewide was to collaborate more closely. Through a series of administrative consolidations and targeted reductions in capital outlays, the system is targeting to save \$10M a year (14).

## Conclusion

The financial pressures on higher education institutions have never been higher. All schools are still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the results will only accelerate changes in the higher education landscape. A recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education laid out some lessons from an institution that came back from the brink (15). Some of the experiences included:

- Accept the magnitude of the problem. Inertia is a powerful and devastating force.
- Determine a timeline to fix the problem. Move too slowly and risk going under, but move too quickly, burnout can occur.
- Build consensus. Communicate early and often and realize that not everyone will be onboard.
- Don't underestimate politics. Brace yourself and realize the reality.
- Empower decision-makers. Cut through the red tape and allow people to make decisions.
- Data-driven decisions. Use benchmarking and reliable data to track and understand costs.
- Track your progress. During times of change, measuring the impact of actions is very important.
- Deliver bad news quickly and decisively. Make needed cuts head-on and prepare to communicate often. Be fair to employees who will lose jobs.
- Invest in areas of strength. When making cuts, shore up the growth areas.
- Stabilize. Make sure that long-term financial viability is achieved.
- Explore new ideas.

The full article can be retrieved at [https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Your-College-Can-Survive/248892?cid=wcontentgrid\\_hp\\_9](https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Your-College-Can-Survive/248892?cid=wcontentgrid_hp_9).

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Michael Ebbs is an experienced higher education leader in the areas of finance and information technology. He has spent 24 years in various roles primarily at academic health science centers. Earlier in his career, he was instrumental in several enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementations at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center and Pepperdine University. Michael transitioned into a finance role at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine. He led a team that implemented a new financial system for the school and eventually became the Chief Financial Officer. He arrived at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in May 2015 as Associate Vice Chancellor of Finance. He currently provides leadership for the areas of Accounting/Budget, Procurement, Payroll, and the Bursar office.

Michael holds a BBA in Accounting and Management Information Systems, Master of Accountancy, and Master of Business Administration degrees from the University of Oklahoma. He is a Certified Public Accountant and he is currently pursuing a Master of Public Health at the University of Memphis. He is married with three children and in his spare time enjoys backpacking and running half marathons.

# Changing the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship to Ensure Student Success

Yancey Freeman, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

## Introduction

The Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic of 2020 at recent count has infected over 7 million people across the world causing more than 420,000 deaths. The United States of America has been profoundly impacted with 100,000 total casualties of this disease. The pandemic has triggered unprecedented unemployment rates equaling those statistics during the Great Depression of the 1930's in the United States (Semuels, 2020). These extraordinary factors have conceptually changed how higher education administrators must think about affordability and access into post-secondary institutions. The pandemic presents an exceptional challenge because of the ongoing work to identify, test and administer a cure or vaccine.

In an attempt to increase academic performance and the number of high school seniors enrolling in post-secondary institutions, several states have implemented a merit based state scholarship program funded by lottery proceeds (Trant, Crabtree, Ciancio, Hart, Watson, Williams, 2014). Legislators from Tennessee created and authorized the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS) as a mechanism to retain the best and brightest students at state supported higher education institutions (Menifield, 2012). Students initially qualify for the TELS award by meeting a set of required academic and/or financial need parameters. The awards are renewable for up to 120 attempted semester hours. Degree requirements at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) are generally completed after students finish a prescribed set of courses to meet the 120-semester hour threshold. TELS addresses affordability for Tennessee residents, but many students lose the scholarship after the first checkpoint due to a stringent renewal criterion.

## Problem Statement

COVID-19's impact of increasing unemployment in Tennessee makes affordability a substantive issue for post-secondary leaders. Hodgman (2014) wrote, "the high school graduate who enrolls full-time immediately after finishing high school, relies on parents for financial support, and either does not work during the school year or works only part-time—is now the exception rather than the rule" (pp. 112-113). Therefore, if parents and students are unemployed, the lack of income substantially impacts a family's ability to pay for higher education costs for dependents. One of the stated goals for lottery scholarship programs is to encourage a more prepared, trained, and educated workforce within the state (Bruce & Carruthers, 2014; Carruthers & Özek, 2016). Sjoquist and Winters (2014) found merit programs increase the likelihood young adults (i.e., 24-30 year olds) will remain in the state after college graduation. Moreover, post college employment retention within this age group demonstrated a positive correlation with the strength of the merit program.

These researchers found the lottery programs worked to retain students and encourage graduates to remain in the state for work after degree completion. How should leaders address affordability for students who lose the TELS award in the middle of a worldwide pandemic? Affordability without a pandemic presented a significant issue for higher education leaders. Now, the stakes are elevated, and the potential for double digit enrollment decreases at college campuses in Tennessee is the ultimate risk.

## Suggested Solutions

Since affordability is a key metric to higher education sustainability in the face of a pandemic, then finding a seamless pathway to address the issue should be paramount. I recently conducted a study of first year UTC TELS recipients to review the retention rate of students who retain the lottery scholarship. Retention is defined in the study as the total number of first-time, full-time new freshman students enrolled at the same institution in the following year. The findings demonstrated a strong correlation between retaining the scholarship award and re-enrollment at the initial institution. Likewise, roughly half of the TELS recipients who did not retain the award ended by withdrawing from the initial institution.

The first solution might include developing a pathway to allow students to retain a portion of their lottery scholarship funds prior to the next checkpoint. Currently, students can lose the TELS award for a number of reasons including dropping below full-time enrollment status and/or for earning a grade point average (gpa) below the minimum eligibility requirement. Recently, Tennessee expanded eligibility to students who lost the

award to regain it at the next available grading checkpoint (i.e., 48, 72, 96 attempted semester hours). One significant barrier is the grade point average requirement increases after the first grading checkpoint from a 2.75 overall gpa after 24 attempted semester hours to a 3.0 gpa at 48 hours. For this reason, most students have substantial difficulty with increasing their gpa to the required level by the next checkpoint. This solution suggests offering the award at 36 attempted semester hours instead of the current 48. The quicker renewal reduces the propensity for students to leave or struggle with affordability.

The next solution might include offering a bridge program for students at certain levels. In other words, students would retain a portion of the award (e.g., half) by meeting certain criteria. The bridge idea offers the best of both options by rewarding students who meet the minimum renewal requirement without devastating recipients who did not. The Florida Bright Futures program implemented this strategy and found that it successfully retained students within higher education institutions (McKinney, 2009).

The final solution might include a significant review of the current gpa and semester hour checkpoint requirement for substantive changes. The decision to change the criteria should be data informed by analyzing trends about TELS retention rates, student persistence to graduation and employment statistics for new graduates. The new benchmark should be based on the actual success rates (e.g., retention and degree attainment) of Tennessee students instead of some random national rate established during the implementation phase of the TELS program. This solution requires extensive work and marketing because the eligibility benchmarks would change. Changes to this program has the potential to confuse current and future recipients. The communication about any changes must be clearly articulated and define succinct outcomes to ensure goals are met.

### **Recommended Implementation**

The bridge program has the most potential for immediate success to improve this program. The standard argument against this method points to a readily available funding source. However, the TELS program is currently running a surplus due to higher than anticipated lottery ticket sales and collection. According to Dr. Mike Krause, Executive Director for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), the state is investing a substantial portion of this surplus toward funding the free tuition community college program called Tennessee Promise. Tennessee Promise addresses affordability, but it falls short to address continued eligibility for recipients who struggle academically during the first grading checkpoint.

The bridge program, even at a reduced monetary rate, would address this retention issue by providing “bridge funding” for recipients until the next designated checkpoint. The current checkpoint requirement is a 2.75 gpa after 24 attempted hours. A lottery bridge program would offer fifty percent of the total initial award for students with at least a 2.5 gpa and seventy-five percent for participants with a minimum 2.67 gpa until the next checkpoint. If students are able to meet the 3.0 minimum gpa requirement at the 48-hour checkpoint, they would regain the full award or continue with percentages until eligibility terminates at 120 attempted hours. A flexible award package, as described, would mitigate the end of a student’s college career due to funding and provide a financial incentive to encourage bridge recipients to increase grades for the higher award at future checkpoints.

### **Conclusion**

The Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship program has increased access to higher education opportunities for thousands of recipients in the state. There is no question about the value of the program or denial of the impact. As Tennessee continues to develop methods to retain the best and brightest students to ensure a highly qualified workforce, it is imperative that the TELS program changes to safeguard this ultimate goal. A TELS bridge program could serve as a resource for hundreds of Tennessee college students hoping to reach their ultimate educational goals.

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Dr. Yancy Freeman grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. Freeman completed an undergraduate degree in Political Science, a Master's degree in Public Administration, and a doctorate in Learning and Leadership. He is a first-generation college graduate. Dr. Freeman has worked at UTC for 24 years, and currently serves as the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

He is a proud member of the Psi Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and currently serves on the Boards of the Girls Preparatory School (GPS), the Public Education Foundation (PEF), and the Chattanooga River City Company. Furthermore, he has served as a member of 100 Black Men of Chattanooga, and on the Boards at Chattanooga Christian School and Youth YMCA Leadership Council. Dr. Freeman was named a 2018 Top 30 Influential Leader in Chattanooga by City Scope Magazine, and he holds active memberships within several honor societies including Golden Key, Alpha Society, and Phi Eta Sigma.

Dr. Freeman has been married for 23 years to Rafielle Freeman, and they have 2 children - Yancy, Jr., a college senior studying Health and Human Performance at UTC, and Camille, a 9th grader at Ringgold High School.

# Reducing Student Debt

Angela A. Gibson, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

## Introduction

There are many wicked problems in higher education. Student debt is one that affects U.S. students long after they graduate or attend college. In the first quarter of 2020, the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) summarized that 42.8 million borrowers owed a combined total of \$1.51 trillion in direct loans, an average of \$35,280 per borrower (1). To give this issue perspective, the estimated gross domestic product (GDP) of the U.S was \$21.2 trillion in 2019 and federal student loans were calculated as roughly 7.1% of GDP (2). This debt summary does not include private student loan debt which was estimated at \$124.65 billion in 2019 (3).

## Long-term Effects of Student Debt

Graduates from public colleges tend to have less debt than those graduating from for-profit colleges. In state rankings of average debt per graduate for the class of 2017, Tennessee ranked 41<sup>st</sup>. Over half (56%) of Tennessee college graduates in this class had federal student loans, averaging \$25,252 per graduate. Connecticut ranked the highest with 57% of its graduates owing an average of \$38,510 (4). For students graduating with a four-year degree from a UT campus, the average federal loan debt was under \$21,000 (Table 1). While this is good news, there is still room to reduce UT student loan debt.

Table 1. Median Federal Loan Debt for UT Graduates Earning a Four-year Degree.

UT Campus	% of Students Receiving Federal Loans	Median Student Federal Loan Debt for Graduates
Chattanooga (UTC)	71%	\$20,792
Knoxville (UTK)	44%	\$20,000
Martin (UTM)	57%	\$20,500

(5, 6, and 7)

Many federal, state, and institution policies affect student loan debt. Factors that impact a student's need/risk for taking on student loans include culture, religion, and financial risk tolerance. Student debt is a topic that is too vast to be fully addressed or resolved. This paper will discuss several ways higher education institutions have sought to lower student debt at four-year degree, post-graduate, and professional degree institutions. It will conclude with recommendations for campuses in the University of Tennessee (UT) System to implement to reduce student debt.

While some question whether investing their money and time to earn a college degree is still worthwhile, research by the Federal Reserve bank of St. Louis shows that earning a four-year college degree has many benefits. It is positively correlated with having a higher income, better health, becoming a homeowner, and being married or having a long-term partner. Individuals with a four-year degree are also less likely to become delinquent on debts (8). For most, the investment in their future is worth the risk.

A contributing factor to student debt is the steep rise in college tuition over the past few decades. According to U.S. News and World Report, in-state tuition and fees at public four-year universities has increased from \$3,508 in 2000 to \$11,260 in 2020. This was an increase of 221% (9). With the increase in tuition, many students are borrowing more to cover the cost of their education. After graduation, student debt has many costs beyond repayment. It lessens the borrower's disposable income, limits career paths, and can impact family status. According to a survey taken by SUMMER (10), many respondents reported their student debt prevented them from saving for retirement, making large purchases, buying homes, or purchasing a car. Other survey results include the following:

- 39% of respondents said they were unable to achieve their career goals
- 28% said their debt prevented them from starting a small business
- 86% reported their student debt as the biggest source of personal stress
- 19% delayed marriage
- 26% delayed having kids

From a government perspective, student debt affects income tax revenues, marriage rates, and poverty rates. It is important to have taxpayers with higher incomes and larger disposable incomes who can buy houses and durable consumer products since personal consumption is roughly 70% of the U.S. economy. Reductions in consumer spending contribute to a slowing economy, unemployment, and recessions (11).

### **Possible Solutions**

Educational institutions have many ways to encourage students to borrow less and assist them in reducing their debt:

- Encourage all students to complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) within the deadline for the aid year. Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), and other federal grants are available to students who meet certain criteria after completing the FAFSA” (12).
- Encourage students to search and apply for all scholarships for which they qualify. Scholarship opportunities can be offered through local churches, community programs, employers, or federal agencies (13). Institutional, departmental, or degree-based programs may be offered through the university the student will attend.
- Change tuition payment plans from lump sum payments once each semester to installment plans that are split over the academic year (i.e., 9–12 equal monthly payments) (14).
- Encourage students to graduate on time. Assist students in planning their path through their degree program to graduation (15).
- Develop Income Sharing Agreements (ISAs) where an institution agrees to fund a certain amount of the student’s education and the student agrees to share a percentage of their income with the institution after graduation for a defined number of years. Typically, the amount the student must pay back is capped at a certain dollar amount based on the funding given. This program can be an alternative to unsubsidized loans (16).
- Fund a middle-class scholarship program. Most low-income students (from families making less than \$50,000 annually) will receive federal, state, and institutional grants. Students from families that make more than \$50,000 usually do not qualify for grants or other aid. California has developed a Middle Class Scholarship which seeks to reduce fees by up to 40% (17).
- Expand U.S. Government income-driven repayment plans (IDPs). IDPs are based on the borrower’s income and usually cap payments at 10% to 15% of the borrower’s monthly income and usually have a forgiveness clause after a number of years (18).
- Send students loan debt letters each year, which outline their loans and estimated repayment amounts (19).
- Encourage students to decline loans and reduce nonessential excess loans (20).
- Create an Office of Financial Wellness and Education, like the University of Indiana’s Money Smarts, where the sole purpose of the office is to teach financial literacy to students so they can make informed financial decisions (21).
- Create a website with a loan strategy checklist for students to follow (22).

### **Recommendations**

Reducing UT students’ loan debt will take a multi-faceted approach. Some campuses may have already deployed some of these recommendations. Both short- and long-term recommendations should be implemented. Reducing student loan debt will add value to UT students’ lives by allowing them to have the ability to reach their financial goals more quickly and reduce post-graduation stress.

#### **Short-term recommendations**

- Create a campus website with a grant, scholarship, and loan strategy checklist for students to use before, during, and after they attend.

- Encourage all students to complete the FAFSA® within the deadline for the aid year. Send messages (via letters, e-mails, texts, or portal posts) to those who have not. Include messages about FAFSA® dependent grants and scholarships.
- Encourage students to seek and apply for scholarships from federal, state, institution, and community resources.
- Send current students letters each year outlining their debt and estimating repayment amounts and other financial information.
- Encourage students to decline or reduce excess in loans when they don't need it. Send messages (via letters, e-mails, texts, or portal posts) prior to the start of each semester.

### **Long-term Recommendations**

- Create an Office of Financial Wellness and Education to educate current and future students about the true cost of college, sound financial skills, and debt awareness. Some UT campuses already have financial wellness coordinators embedded in other offices where financial wellness is one small priority in a large list of other departmental priorities. This office should have dedicated counselors who are available to meet with students and can focus on giving students the best and most fiscally sound advice about saving money and reducing debt.
- Streamline the institutional, departmental, and degree-based scholarship application processes. Track scholarships centrally to ensure all scholarship funds are being appropriated to students. Reduce narrowly-defined scholarships that are difficult to award because requirements are too stringent.
- Change campus tuition installment plans from lump sum payment plans once or twice a semester to equally split installments for 9–12 months across the academic year. Offer this in a pilot program and measure its rate of success and on-time payments.
- Encourage students to graduate on-time by assisting them in planning a path from college matriculation to graduation. Some campuses already use degree audit reports (DARs) to show students their progress. Send students letters indicating progress toward degree completion and whether they are on-track to graduate on-time. Create a “progress toward graduation” dashboard within each student’s portal account. The dashboard could show the program in which the student is enrolled, classes and hours completed toward that program, classes and hours still needed to complete their degree, and which classes are prerequisite and corequisite classes.
- Establish a Middle-Class Scholarship for students whose families earn more than \$50,000 annually. A 2013 study found that students whose family earnings were between \$40,000 to \$59,000 typically did not qualify for student aid packages and had 60% more debt than students in families earning less than \$40,000 and 280% more debt than students whose families earned between \$100,000 and \$149,000 annually. This trend held true for other middle-class students with family incomes up to \$99,000 (23).

### **Conclusion**

UT can be successful in reducing student debt by implementing many of these short- and long- term recommendations. The University of Indiana has been successful at decreasing its students loan debt by sending students annual loan debt letters, encouraging students to decline or reduce student excess loans, creating a loan strategy checklist and creating an Office of Financial Wellness and Education. Over a six-year period, UI was able to reduce the volume of federal and private loans by \$126.4 million, a 19% reduction (24). California has had great success with its Middle Class Scholarship Program. This scholarship provides gift assistance for students at UC and the California State University with household incomes of up to \$164,000. In 2016–17, UC students received \$17.7 million in Middle Class Scholarship awards (25). UT should make a commitment to reduce student debt to its students to ensure their long-term success.

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Angela A. Gibson is the chief information officer (CIO) at the UT Institute of Agriculture (UTIA), where she provides strategic leadership, vision, and direction for IT projects throughout the Institute. Ms. Gibson joined the Institute in January of 2019, bringing over 20 years of experience in the IT industry to her current role.

Prior to joining UTIA, Ms. Gibson served as the IT team leader for the Division of Enrollment Management at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) for 14 years, where she managed the division’s technology team, implemented campus-wide imaging systems, served on the Banner student information system (SIS) implementation team, and was also the Division’s technical lead during the creation and opening of the One Stop Office.

Ms. Gibson began her career at the UTK as a research associate for the Center for Transportation Research, working on transportation- and energy-related research projects for Oak Ridge National Laboratory. In 2000, she became a systems analyst in the Bursar’s Office where she designed and created database systems.

Ms. Gibson earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business administration from the Haslam College of Business at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She earned her project management professional (PMP) certification in 2019.

# How Does Higher Ed Technology Stay Proactive in an Ever-Changing World, As Budgets Are Cut and Deferred Maintenance Becomes the Norm

*Dan Harder, University of Tennessee Health Science Center*

As I write this paper, the world is continuing to deal with the far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the higher education community, remote and online learning has become the top institutional priority for most universities (Jody Greene, 2020). Seemingly overnight, the work of technology and IT leaders has become the focal point of campuses, and the move to online was expected to occur with minimal interruption to faculty, staff, and students.

Most institutional and campus leaders, however, do not fully realize the vastness of systems, servers, bandwidth, contracts, support, and infrastructure needed to successfully activate the move to remote learning. The resource factor in terms of people, which are typically limited within IT budgets, creates a significant strain on the migration to remote learning. Staying proactive as opposed to highly reactive can be a challenge, as the team members who actually support the current effort to maintain teaching and remote technologies generally reside in the campus Center for Teaching and Learning, Instructional Technology, or Instructional Design units (Jody Greene, 2020). Most of the units are under-resourced and can provide limited manpower (Jody Greene, 2020).

One of the most important responsibilities of an IT leader is to show enterprise leaders how important and vital the strategic investment in technology is, and if that investment is not made, how disastrous consequences can and will occur once technology needs become the top priority for an institution. Funding people and infrastructure, along with the ability to stay proactive and nimble, should be the primary lesson learned during this “new normal.”

Campuses have many needs, and as campus needs grow, operational budgets shrink; the focus turns to more forward-facing institutional priorities. Residence halls, new construction, academic outcomes that enhance an institution’s reputation, are typically viewed as a top priority (Smith & Curtis, 2019). From a budgeting perspective, and as a result, IT has historically been perceived by senior executives as a back-office, administrative resource. Chancellors, Presidents, and CFOs typically hold the CIO and IT leadership team solely responsible for the level of IT spending (Smith & Curtis, 2019). The role of IT, however, has changed continuously since the year 2000, and in the 21st century, it is difficult to think of any business function or department that could reach its goals and objectives without IT (Smith & Curtis, 2019).

Existing IT funding models are often a legacy of a time when Information Technology played a much smaller and more predictable role within an institution (Bedi et al., 2015). Similarly, the role of technology in higher education has undergone a metamorphosis, but the budget processes at many institutions have largely remained the same (Bedi et al., 2015). While “keeping the lights on” and making sure the “trains run on time” is still a major component of IT, technology needs to be agile and flexible, and financial resources should be allocated and available to assist in transformational work that requires technology at the heart of the transformation. Considering the multidimensional challenges facing institutions of higher education, campus communities should feel an imperative to critically examine and address the issues that pervade technology funding (Bedi et al., 2015).

The most highly recognized IT funding models are based on practices that do not reflect the changing landscape of higher education or the necessity of continuous investment. At many institutions, IT funding depends on one-time expenditures or capital-funding mechanisms that are based on building-construction funding models predicated on a life expectancy of 20 years or more (Bedi et al., 2015). Such models don’t provide the stability or flexibility needed for modern IT investments (Bedi et al., 2015). It can be difficult to convince institutional leaders to get behind these unprecedented changes and move funding and resources from colleges into IT in order to support the overall mission of the institution.

For technology to realize its full potential as a strategic enabler of the institution, staying proactive and delivering maximum value, there must be strategic alignment at the highest levels of leadership regarding how and where technology will be utilized to support institutional functions and the mission (Bedi et al., 2015).

Throughout the world of higher ed, a wide variety of organizational structures influence the effectiveness of the CIO. These structures should not inhibit the development of collaborative relationships between the CIO and other academic and administrative leaders, often seen as “turf wars” over resources. In order to successfully secure sustainable funding for IT, the CIO should work in strong partnership with the appropriate campus leaders and have access to the campus leadership table (Bedi et al., 2015).

If the university and financial leaders are not convinced of the value of IT, the onus falls on the CIO to bridge that gap and present the needs of the institution in more “user-friendly” layman’s terms. The CIO must design each interaction to strategically appeal to each campus leader. The CIO must speak in terms that the campus leadership finds relevant and show the value IT brings to each particular initiative. These types of relationships, coming to leaders on their own terms, and partnering across the entire campus will demonstrate why IT should be viewed as a strategic asset, but the CIO must build relationships and sell the value of IT to all campus leaders.

There is also a need for common definitions of needs in order to facilitate discussion and reviews of the funding concerning Opex and Capex expenditures for financial leaders (Bedi et al., 2015). To influence the changes needed to fund IT, the relationship between IT and senior leadership needs to be strong, open, collaborative, and transparent allowing the CIO to be a strategic partner at the table (Bedi et al., 2015).

Whether the IT organization at an institution is viewed merely as a cost center or as a strategic asset enabling the institutional mission is a direct result of the understanding and thinking of the executive leadership team (Bedi et al., 2015). The CIO should be at the cabinet level, attending senior-most meetings of the institutional leaders, to cultivate the partnerships and steer IT towards being perceived as the strategic asset that it is.

EDUCAUSE research shows that to support the overall IT funding philosophy, a clear and comprehensive budgeting methodology and structure is needed. The foundation of a good budget model is to have the appropriate systems and accounting structure in place in order to capture the funding and expenses with appropriate detail to develop reports and create future budget projections (Bedi et al., 2015).

At the highest level, the account structure should be able to segregate Capex from Opex by needs and services. Additional classifications could differentiate between hardware and software purchases, support agreements, service agreements for cloud services, and others campus needs (Bedi et al., 2015). The goal in budgeting accountability is to create the structure for strategic decision making. A common framework across the organization will help ensure that a standard structure and definition are understood throughout IT and financial units (Bedi et al., 2015).

In my past experiences, the largest segment of IT budgets has traditionally been distributed to core infrastructure, services and systems. Significant resources have also gone into finding the funds required to keep these areas running and operational (Bedi et al., 2015). Similarly, the efforts of IT staff have been consumed with the operational aspects of those core services. (EDUCAUSE ECAR).

What I have seen in my career, and what EDUCAUSE data supports, is that only after funding is allocated to the development and maintenance of the core IT infrastructure, reduced and remaining monies are then allocated to experimentation and innovation (Bedi et al., 2015). This creates a challenge to CIO’s and other IT leaders to stay proactive in a nimble and ever-changing world of higher education.

This model limits the ability for IT to adapt, especially in today’s landscape, which is defined by advances such as the Internet of Things and ubiquitous access to wireless and internet (Bedi et al., 2015). The current funding needs to evolve in order to sufficiently allow IT the opportunity to move nimbly and fully embrace new technologies that better serve academic and research communities (Bedi et al., 2015).

The key to ensuring that IT is effective, responsive, and supportive of the institutional mission is to employ a funding model that enables agility and flexibility (Bedi et al., 2015). In order to move toward such a model, the EDUCAUSE ECAR working group suggests a three-tiered framework for IT budgeting that rebalances funding and provides each tier of the framework with a consistent base of resources.

The proposed IT funding framework consolidates the wide variety of funding models currently adopted throughout higher education into three categories (Bedi et al., 2015):

- Core Services
- Flexible Services
- Experimental Services

Most institutions will attempt to allocate funds to each of the three categories, but the commitment of dollars beyond core services is often opportunistic, sporadic, unpredictable, and, all too frequently, by luck and by chance (Bedi et al., 2015). These areas of Run, Grow, and Transform, should be funded by percentage and reassessed each budget cycle year (Smith & Curtis, 2019). Building partnerships, having the CIO at the institutional strategic table, and creating strong IT financial frameworks should be considered the most important strategies in growing a proactive organization.

Have the CIO in the institutional cabinet, as just about every service and campus need requires some form of technology. Allow the CIO to weigh in on vital decisions: thinking through data governance, implementation dependencies, and resources required to be innovative. Acting as a strategic partner with the financial, operational, and academic leaders of the organization will allow the CIO to be aware of the many initiatives competing for a limited pool of funds and institutional funding changes (Michal Duong, 2020). Forging strong partnerships with staff members in the finance office can make a difference during the budget planning process (Michal Duong, 2020).

One of the biggest takeaways for IT leaders should be to execute due diligence when maintaining the current budget. This includes the tracking of expenses and burn rates allowing for adjustments and reforecasting where appropriate (Michal Duong, 2020). Institution leaders must create a culture of innovation, by not just funding the operations, but also allowing flexible and experimental technologies and services (Bedi et al., 2015).

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Dan Harder is the Vice Chancellor for IT and Chief information Officer at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. In this role, Dan is responsible for setting the strategy and direction for enterprise technology needs at UTHSC. Dan also provides leadership, support, and coordination across all facets of technology planning, delivery, and design in addition to partnering with campus leaders and faculty to implement technology solutions.

Before arriving at UTHSC, Dan held IT leadership positions at Duke University, Elon University, and most recently at Emory University, leading the Emory School of Medicine technology portfolio.

Dan has a bachelor's degree in Music Education from Appalachian State University and a master's degree in Project Management from Western Carolina University.

# Growing the University of Tennessee's Research through Information and Research Intelligence

Bruce LaMattina, University of Tennessee at Knoxville

## 1. Motivation

The competitive landscape for research funding is shifting and becoming increasingly difficult and complex. Technology and innovation are accelerating, and sponsors are seeking academia and industry research to fuel this paradigm through the convergence of disciplines and ideas in a collaborative innovation ecosystem. Although competition for the externally funded research is fierce, most universities are following an old familiar reactive approach to their research growth strategies. If the University of Tennessee conforms to the same tactics, at best, we can only expect incremental growth in research dollars received as our current data suggests. To achieve exponential growth, I propose three pillars for research growth; (1) to enhance our efforts to identify **emerging research opportunities through research intelligence** (capture management), (2) to focus on **applied research at the nexus of academia, industry, and government** (see Figure 1), and (3) to increase our emphasis on **winning and sustaining large centers**.

*Pillar 2: Working applied research at the nexus of academia, industry, and government* is essential to achieve significant research growth and is an area where the University can improve. As Figure 2 shows, industry receives the largest portion of federal R&D funding of any group and is more than 2 times that received by universities. Considering that industry also spends internal dollars on R&D (IRAD), industry should be a prime target for research funding for universities. However, most universities struggle when working with industry because of intellectual property issues, short research timelines (typically industry research projects are expected return a profit in less than 2 years), and industry's focus on applied research (in contradiction to most universities focus on basic research). In addition, basic research funding only accounts for about a quarter of federal R&D dollars spent and there are far fewer universities competing for applied research. Therefore, in business terms, by the University not aggressively pursuing industry and applied research it is ignoring a large potential market.

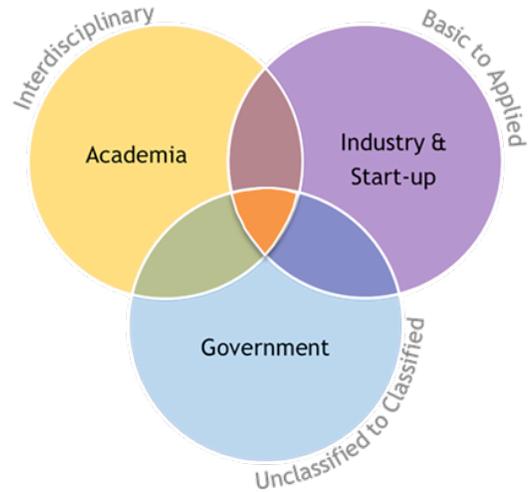


Figure 1: Research growth potential is at the nexus of academia, industry, and government

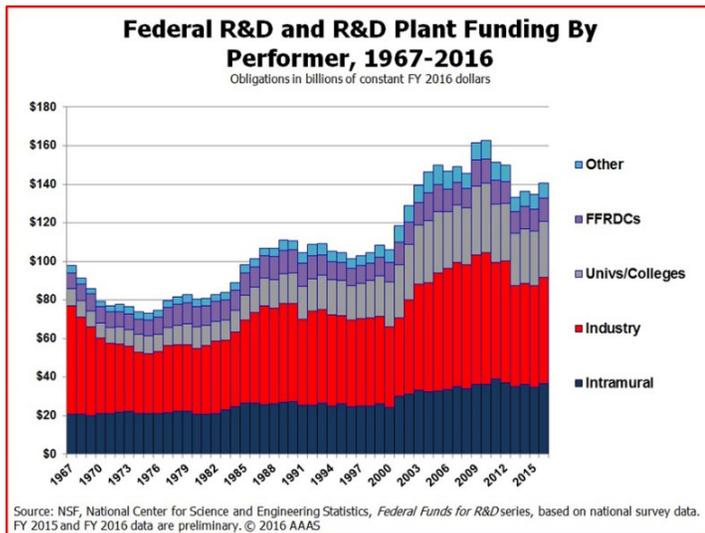


Figure 2: Federal R&D and plant funding by performer

*Pillar 3: Winning and sustaining large centers* is one of the most critical categories for research expenditure growth. In 2018, UTK had a drop in federal research awards and NSF awards dropped to a 10 year low to only \$20M. Analysis of the data revealed that one of the primary reasons for the drop was due to the completion of a single center grant. NSF funding for the Joint Institute for Computational Science (JICS) decreased from \$39M in 2009 to \$0 in 2018. In addition, NSF awards dropped 30% in one year from 2017 to 2018. This was primarily the result of two other large center awards ending. Further analysis revealed that during that 10 year period, NSF funding excluding large center grants was steady and actually increased slightly. Thus, we can conclude that winning and sustaining large center grants is an essential growth strategy.

The analysis above led us to conduct another study on the impact of faculty participation on research expenditures. Currently about 43% of the tenure and tenure track faculty have active externally funded research projects. In this study, we asked the question: “what would be the impact on research expenditures, if we could increase the number of funded faculty by 10% each year until we reached 100% ?” For the purposes of the study, we assumed that each newly funded faculty member would receive awards and remain funded at the median funding level for their respective departments. To our astonishment, even if 100% of our faculty were funded, it would only increase expenditures by \$23M and would take 10 years to achieve. Taking into account more realistic participation rates by eliminating faculty who have ceased to publish (since they are highly unlikely to attract external funding) and those that have administrative duties that prevent them from participating in research, we estimated that the likely impact would only be about \$13M over the next 10 years. This is more strong evidence that a better path to growing research expenditures is through winning and sustaining large center grants.

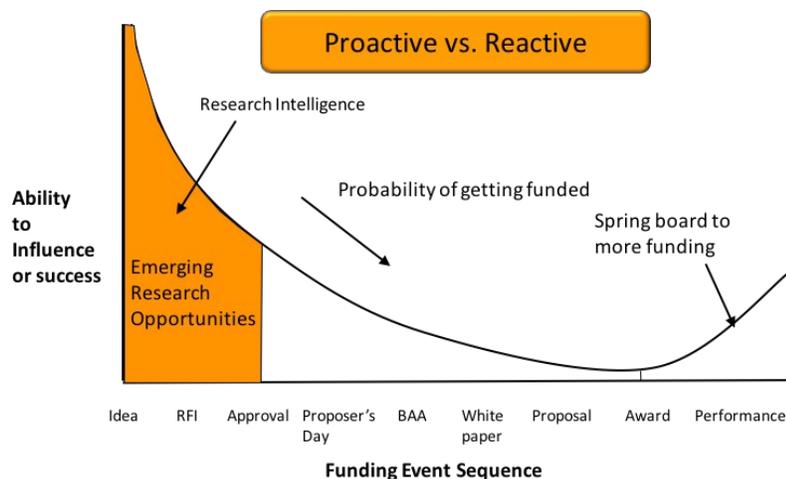
*Pillar 1: Emerging opportunities through research intelligence* has the power to tell us who, what, and where to pursue emerging opportunities that can provide the University a leg up on the competition. The remainder of this paper will focus on the first pillar, outlining a framework to capitalize on it and thus, transform the research posture of the University of Tennessee from a mostly reactive one into a more proactive one.

## 2. Emerging Opportunities

As funding announcements arrive with seemingly shorter notice, we require a system for early identification of research opportunities. Most universities wait until the release of a solicitation or broad agency announcement (BAA) before they initiate their research development efforts. If we take a more proactive approach using research intelligence to identify emerging opportunities, we will increase our ability to influence future solicitations, improve our success rate, and uncover more opportunities with less competition.

Many investigators do not realize that there is an opportunity to influence funders prior to the release of BAA. For the purposes of this paper, we define **emerging opportunities** as potential research prospects that are still in the formative stages. Figure 3 shows an example of the evolution of a large funding award for a typical federal agency. Every new funding program requires program managers and leaders at agencies to go through a process of identifying research challenges as well as the ideas that could potentially address them. We see an opportunity to inject ourselves in these early formative stages to influence the direction that a funding program will take and to increase our chances of being funded.

Figure 3: Emerging Opportunities



## 2.1 Research Intelligence System

Developing a system to identify emerging research opportunities will be difficult and must be built around a searchable data repository comprised of information collected from the following sources:

- Human intelligence
- Externally published data sources
- Internal data sources

**Key observation: To date there are no commercial software platforms designed to intelligently mine and predict emerging research opportunities.**

## 2.2. Human Intelligence

Collecting and effectively using human intelligence is difficult and most universities don't take advantage of it. If done properly, it will set us apart and perhaps provide one of the most significant enhancements to our research enterprise to date. Currently, we gather information from open sources such as congressional budgets and research roadmaps published by various agencies. Through our research administration units and federal relations, we connect program officers with faculty members. This is a good start but to fully capitalize on human intelligence a systematic framework supported by a software platform is needed.

To maximize our human intelligence data collection efforts, we propose to have a larger and more sustained presence in Washington DC. In addition to working much more closely with the UT System Government Relations team, this means requesting an FTE with a broad technical background that would spend at least 50% of the time in DC (possibly in partnership with Corporate and Foundation Engagement and the UT System). We also propose to send our staff members and faculty to DC on a more regular basis. The focus of these visits will be to have technical discussions with R&D decision makers at agencies and corporations and to capture and database the insights gained. For example, we will take advantage of memberships like the United States Technology Leaders Council (USTLC), Government-University-Industry Research Roundtable (GUIRR), and Other Transaction Agreement (OTA) Consortia to help exponentially grow our network of external R&D decision makers.

## 2.3. Externally published data sources

As part of our research intelligence efforts we propose to focus on consistently capturing and tracking high value externally published information. We will target the following information:

- National Academy of Science (NAS), National Academy of Engineering (NAE), National Science Foundation (NSF), JASONS, and National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) reports
- Agency Requests for Information (RFIs)
- Metrics on trending journal articles by subject/discipline
- Agency strategic plans and budgets
- Special workshops sponsored by Program Managers by technical area
- Company profiles, R&D contracts by agency, and technical expertise

## 2.4. Internal data sources

We will collect and catalog information about our research capabilities and differentiators from colleges, centers, departments, and individual faculty. In addition to the information we gain by working directly with our faculty, Associate Research Deans, and Deans, we will capture technical information from our internal research seed proposals (quad charts) and will also use existing software, such as Elements, Dimensions, InCites, Academic Analytics, COS PIVOT and Cayuse, to identify and understand our faculty's research expertise.

## 2.5. Combining the data

We propose the development of a customized software platform to combine our human intelligence with published information and our research differentiators and faculty profiles. Since the customized software

would involve the collecting, modeling, and visualizing large amounts of data (some unstructured) we propose working with an outside vendor or UT OIT. The main objective will be to synthesize the data into actionable information (i.e., who, what, and where – Figure 4) and to create network maps showing connections between key funding decision makers, potential partners/competitors from corporations, federal labs, and other universities, and our faculty (Figure 5).

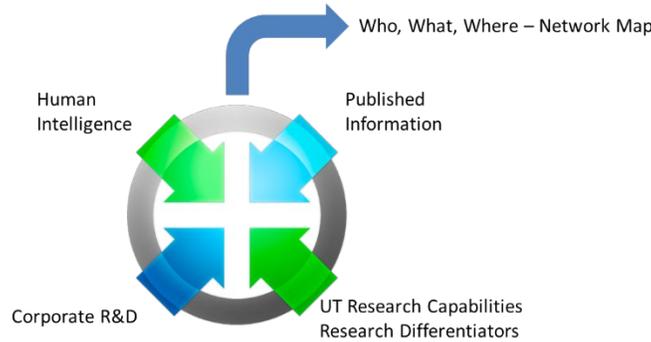


Figure 4: Inputs to develop emerging opportunity network maps

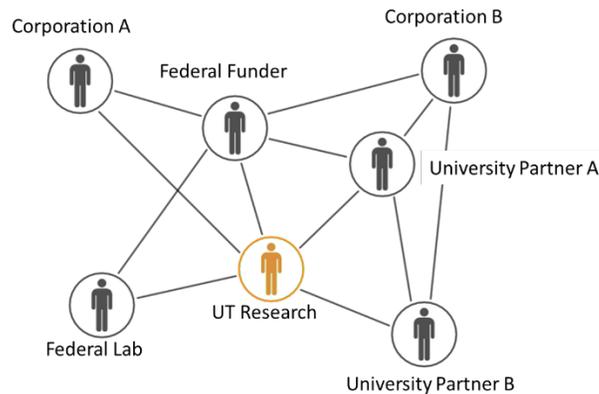


Figure 5: Emerging research opportunity network maps

## 2.6. Empowering the Network

By far, the most difficult element of this plan is to turn the information into action and capitalize on the research intelligence. With busy schedules, it's difficult to ask faculty to take time away from teaching, current projects, and writing proposals to spend time on emerging opportunities that are not yet announced, some of which may never see the light of day. However, if successful, we believe the process will gain acceptance over time. Therefore, we propose to stand-up a small group of technical experts called UT Fellows, dedicated to the cause. Ideally, this group should be comprised of research scientists and seasoned faculty, and would likely require the buying-out of some of their time. Members of the group should have broad technical backgrounds, understand UT research capabilities, be good communicators, and be willing to travel.

## 2.7. A Decision-Making Framework

Once we understand the emerging opportunities through the use of research intelligence and the resulting emerging research network maps, we will be confronted with choices about which emerging opportunities to pursue or not to pursue. By organizing the information pertaining to each opportunity into three key categories, 1) internal capability, 2) external opportunity requirements, and 3) external capability, we can create a process map to guide us to the best choice as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

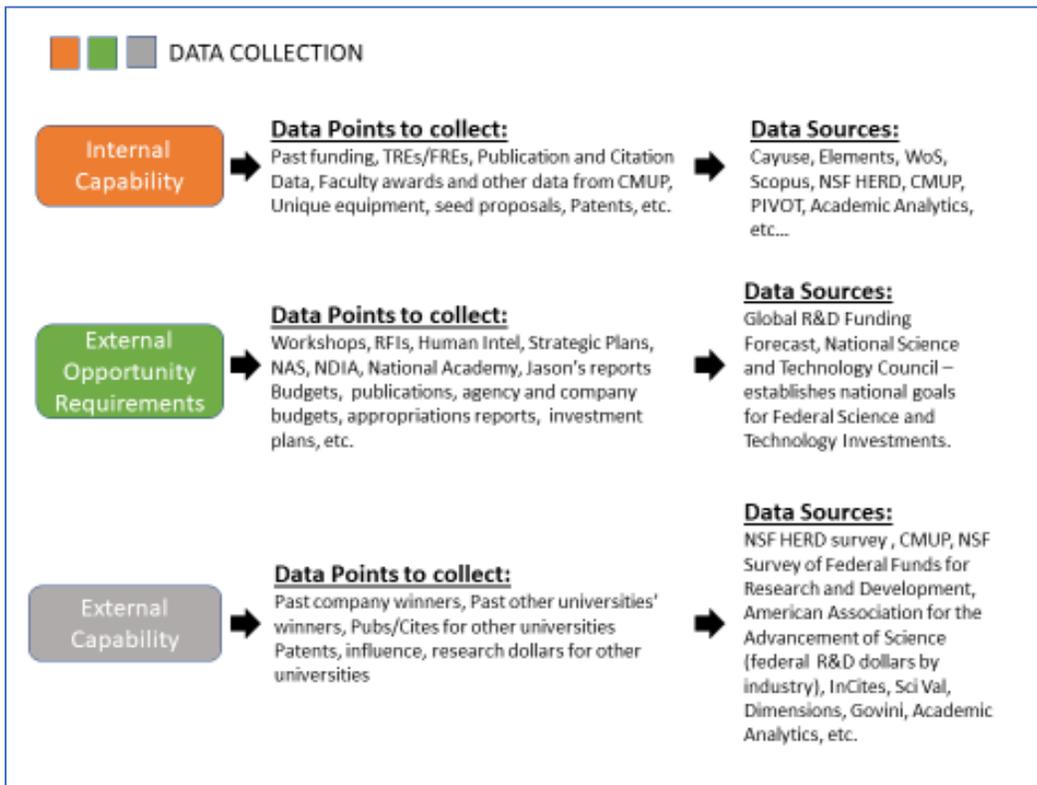


Figure 6: Categories, data, and data sources to analyze opportunities and drive decision making

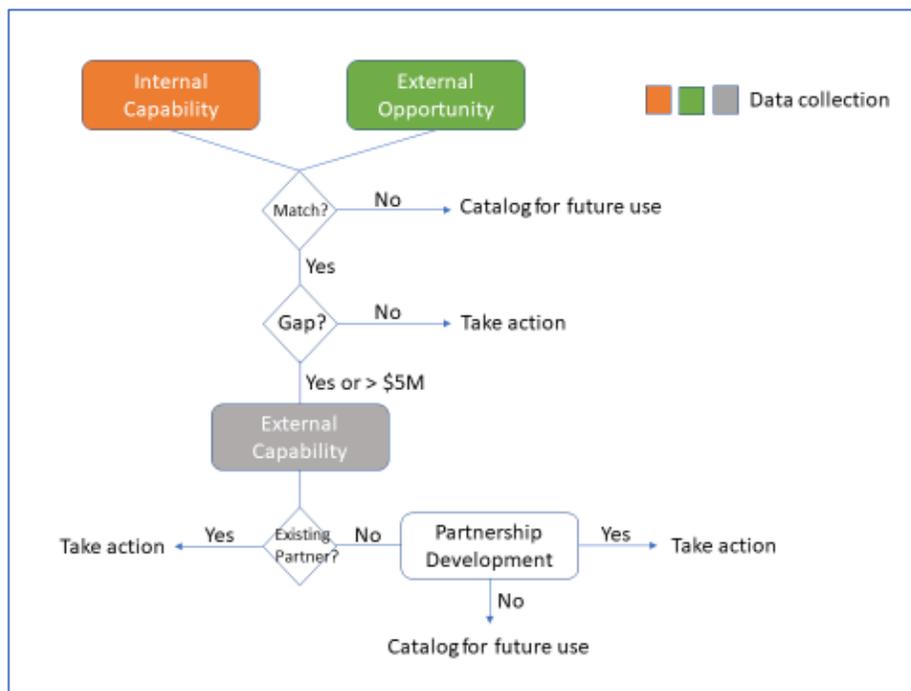


Figure 7: Decision making framework process flow diagram

Based on an assessment of the individual emerging opportunities, the UT Fellows and research staff will use the network maps to develop project plans and form optimal teams to implement them. These teams should be small, agile, and dedicated to the process. We envision that they will be comprised of researchers, UT

Fellows, and a project manager. We will develop a framework to track progress of the plan and adapt until we either achieve success or end the process (Figures 8). Independent of the outcome, we will gain useful insights and UT corporate knowledge that will be saved in the data repository for future use.

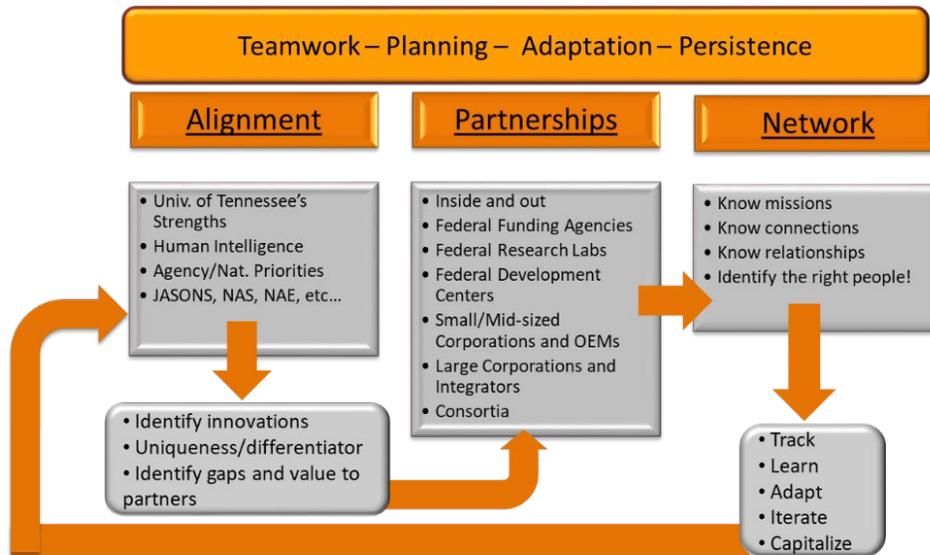


Figure 8: A framework for intelligent networking of ideas



Bruce LaMattina came to the University of Tennessee in 2017 as the Office of Research and Engagement's associate vice chancellor for research development. In January 2019, he was named associate vice chancellor for strategic research initiatives. In this role, LaMattina provides leadership to facilitate research growth in strategically important areas.

LaMattina has 25 years of experience that spans academia, corporate research and development, and government. Prior to joining UT, he led the Charlotte Research Institute (CRI) at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte (UNCC). LaMattina also served as the director of federal research relations at Rutgers University (2011-2015); as program manager for the Solid Mechanics Branch in the Mechanical Sciences Division of the Engineering Sciences Directorate at the US Army Research Office (ARO) (2001-2011) and as a principle researcher at ABB, Inc. (1996-2001). In addition, he was a visiting professor at NC State University (1996-2011) and an adjunct professor at Duke University (2005-2011).

LaMattina received his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering with minors in Civil Engineering and Mathematics from North Carolina State University and is a professionally licensed engineer in North Carolina. His master's and bachelor's degrees in mechanical engineering are from the University of Delaware.

# Providing Accurate and Relevant Financial Data to Facilitate University Board of Trustees Decisions

Mary Carr McDonald, University of Tennessee System Administration

## University Board of Trustees and Its Finance and Administration Committee

The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees is made up of twelve members, including ten University of Tennessee alumni whose careers commonly involve being CEO of businesses, the State of Tennessee's Commissioner of Agriculture, and one current University student. The Board of Trustees holds regularly scheduled meetings three times a year and may hold special meetings as well. The purpose of these meetings is for the Board to approve decisions that affect the University.

Many of these Board decisions are based on financial data of the University. To better focus on the financial data, the Board has a standing Finance and Administration Committee made up of the Board of Trustees Chair and three other Board members. This committee is required to meet at least annually and usually meets at each of the regularly scheduled board meetings. The meetings generally last two hours with the Chief Financial Officer and other officials who present financial data for their review and approval.

*The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, Finance and Administration Committee Charter, Revision 2/19/20*, states the committee's purpose as follows: "The Committee assists the Board in overseeing the University's finances, operations, facilities, and Health Science Center clinical activities; and in ensuring that the University operates within available resources and applicable laws and policies in a manner supportive of the University's strategic plan." The charter further states that "The committee is responsible for formulating and recommending action or necessary policies in all matters relating to finance, business, and administration, including the investment of University funds." The charter includes the following areas of the Board's financial oversight:

- 1) Operating budget
- 2) State appropriations
- 3) Student tuition and fees, including waivers and discounts
- 4) Financial Aid
- 5) University compensation and benefit programs, including voluntary retirement incentive plans
- 6) Campus facilities master plans
- 7) Capital outlay budgets
- 8) Building construction and capital improvements not included in capital outlay budgets
- 9) Acquisition and Sale of Real Property
- 10) Debt obligations including issuance of debt for building construction and real estate purchases
- 11) Creation of legal entities governed by the University
- 12) University fund investments

With so many areas to review, it is critical for the Finance and Administration committee members to be provided with accurate and relevant financial data that best represent the health of the University. This financial data must be provided in all areas of responsibilities of this committee. To allow for effective review, the data must be both comprehensive and concise. This can create a real challenge.

## Board Financial Oversight Areas

The **operating budget** must consider priorities and plans of the University. Both revenues and expenses must be projected. The process uses comparisons of prior years and considers current economic factors. The largest operating expenses as a percentage for the University are salaries and benefits. While budgeting for salaries and benefits may at first appear easy due to the State's annually approved raise percentages, the need to attract and keep talented faculty and staff brings about a complexity that is difficult to quantify.

**State appropriations** for a public university like the University of Tennessee are vital. Metrics such as student retention and graduation rates influence the amount that the State distributes to each school.

**Student tuition and fees** are calculated using projections on the number of students, the number of class credit hours students take a semester, and the associated costs of these credit hours. The publicity surrounding the increase in student fees each year makes the board decisions in this area very sensitive.

**Financial aid** is dependent on funding provided by the Federal and State Department of Education. While the Tennessee HOPE scholarship provides the ability for more students to attend an institute of higher education, it has put a downward pressure on the state appropriations funding.

Decisions regarding **campus master plans**, including the construction of buildings and other capital outlays, are often more difficult than decisions surrounding general operations and students.

**Capital Outlay** decisions have great risk due to the large long-term commitments of funding. Revenues must cover the cost of borrowing and debt repayment, and this revenue can be unpredictable. Moreover, capital building campaigns result in an increase in related facilities maintenance costs. The unexpected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the University to take a hard look at the need for funds for University Athletics in the area of capital outlay debt repayment given the risk that football games will be suspended for the 2020 fall season.

The **creation of legal entities** gives rise to often-times unknown risks. Because it is a new entity, there may be little direct data on which to make financial projections. These new entities are often created as limited liability corporations to limit the liability of the University. Due to the liability risks inherent in their purpose, there can be risks of negative publicity.

**University fund investments** in the past have been one of the simpler areas of financial oversight. The University has historically invested in safe, low risk investments. However, increased complexities in the markets in recent years, as well as mounting pressures to increase the return on investments due to the reductions in state funding, have resulted in universities considering more diverse investments.

Universities across the nation are increasing their efforts to seek **gifts, both regular and endowments**, from alumni and other potential donors. This increased effort comes with increased costs. At the beginning of Calendar Year 2020, the University of Tennessee instituted an assessment on gifts given to the University. This assessment will provide greater funding to allow for enhanced efforts in fund-raising.

### **Board Meeting Financial Materials**

Due to all of these very diverse areas of financial impact, the agenda and materials provided for the Finance and Administration Committee meetings are incredibly lengthy. The provided materials are often about 250 pages, but they can be as long as 400 pages.

In recent meetings, these materials have been broken down into two sections of approximately equal sizes – the Agenda with tabbed sections with the details behind each agenda item such as summaries and charts, and an Appendix which includes many of the full reports. The materials are provided in both paper and electronic formats. The electronic agenda uses hyperlinks to take the reader to the detail tabs to make it easier to review the information.

As all of us who have sat in presentations understand, it is much easier to follow when visual charts are used instead of written explanations. Thus, much of the committee materials consists of dashboards, pie charts, trend analyses, and rounded dollar figures. The presentation of key performance indicators (KPIs) have been added in recent years by many universities, including the University of Tennessee.

It is important for the committee members to have an in-depth understanding of the issues presented in the materials. Therefore, the materials contain not only the visual summaries but also the full reports for the committee members to study. The agenda and materials are sent to the committee members in advance to allow committee members to review the information and ask questions in advance. Reviewing in-depth

materials and asking questions in advance allow the actual committee meetings to effectively cover all agenda items by focusing on critical issues and on items that require votes.

Committee members are expected to have a level of financial data understanding so they can ask questions. Members may ask about the priorities reflected in presented budgets, about the trade-offs in making financial decisions, and about how realistic are the presented financial projections and conclusions.

### **Recommendations**

How do we as a University best facilitate University Board of Trustees and their financial decisions? As shown above, the University provides the Finance and Administration committee and other board members with accurate and relevant financial data that best represents the health of the University in the financial areas for which the Board has responsibilities. This data is provided in both summary and detail reporting formats.

For the provision of financial data to be most effective, the University should identify potential board members who have the capability of understanding such financial data and who have the availability and interest to serve as stewards of the University's resources and its mission. The Board assigns its members to the various committees based on their specific skillsets, and the University provide education and training.

The University should always provide education and training in the areas in which board members serve. The archives of past Board of Trustees meetings at the University of Tennessee are available online as a starting point for learning and as a resource for historical perspective.

Education is not just done at the beginning of a board member's term but rather is an ongoing process to continually develop the board member's skills and relationships in order to support the overall mission, strategic plan, and health of the University. This education should include informal one-on-one conversations where open dialogue builds relationships and creates trust between the University and the Board. Calls to individual members by University leaders in between board meetings builds inclusion and loyalty to the University. Board members' views are often shaped and positively influenced in these outside conversations.

Choosing the best qualified board members and then providing them accurate and relevant financial information is critical to ensuring the health of the University. The most vital aspect of providing accurate and relevant financial information is the ongoing formal and informal education of board members.

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Mary Carr McDonald is the Controller of the University of Tennessee. Mary began her career in the Knoxville College of Education. She joined the Controller's Office in 1986 working in Sponsored Projects. Mary was then Grants and Contracts Specialist and Acting Director of Accounting and Disbursements for the Chattanooga campus. After working as Accountant II at Roane State Community College and Staff Auditor at Lockheed Martin Energy Systems, Mary returned to the University of Tennessee Systems Administration as Senior Auditor. In 1999, Mary was selected for the IRIS implementation team, and she became the first Director of Contracts in 2007. In 2011, Mary returned to the Controller's Office as Assistant Controller with an emphasis on sponsored project accounting, was promoted to Associate Controller in July 2018, and was promoted to Controller in September 2019..

Mary has a BS degree in Finance and a MBA from UT Chattanooga and is a CPA. She is active in the East Tennessee Chapter of Association of Government Accountants, having served as Chapter President for two terms. Mary represents the university on the Council of Government Relations. Mary is married to Dennis McDonald and lives in Maryville.

# Government Relations: The Testimony

David Mills, University of Tennessee System Administration

The character of an institution is a unique, peculiar thing. Universities are no exception. The University of Bologna was established in one thousand eighty eight (1088). The initial material conditions and circumstances that facilitated its formation have vanished. America took this ancient torch, integrated the democratic ideal and transformed higher education through The Morrill Act of eighteen sixty two (1862). The character of American higher education would never be the same.

In eighteen sixty four (1864) Iowa State University became America's first Morrill Act or Land Grant University. In this regard The University of Tennessee (UT) is a hybrid, starting privately in seventeen ninety four as Blount College, ultimately becoming Tennessee's flagship land grant university in eighteen sixty seven (1867).

State governance of public colleges and universities has been filled with challenges and opportunities ever since. The recent FOCUS Act, with Community Advisory Boards; and changes wrought by COVID-19 are merely the most recent examples of overnight institutional change.

Today UT faces a constantly growing and changing body politic; state population; student body; faculty; local and system wide administration and governance structure; United States Congress; State Legislature; various accrediting bodies and, federal and state agency regulatory regimes. However, the state of Tennessee is the largest financial contributor to UT. In an age of rapid, exponential social, political, technological, environmental, and cultural change, UT will be challenged to retain its character and history while meeting the challenges of destiny.

In this regard, the central challenge of change is the ability to adjust a mental, institutional outlook to a new reality. UT's government relations team will play an increasingly important role in leading through this change by helping define, protect and advance UT's character. Five critical elements will be essential for future UT government relations leaders to succeed effectively.

## 1) Know Thyself

It is written, "Let a man examine himself". Socrates wrote, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Shakespeare wrote "To thine own self be true." You cannot be yourself until you learn who you are, and you cannot learn who you are unless you think about and examine yourself. Nkrumah wrote, "Practice without thought is blind; thought without practice is empty." Moreover, imagine being adrift in the world without a center, anchor or foundation.

Self examination helps illuminates our talent(s), ethos, ethics, values principles, purpose, mission. King noted, "After one has discovered what he is made for, he should surrender all of the power in his being to the achievement of this. He should seek to do it so well that nobody could do it better....If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper...sweep streets even as Michaelangelo painted pictures, as Beethoven composed music, or as Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well." Then one must know the purpose of education.

## 2) The Purpose of Education

The root of education- educe- means to draw out. Historically, education was elitist for a chosen few. When The United States brought democracy to higher education through The Morrill Act there a debate raged about the purpose of educating "common" people. Some thought the purpose of education was to make a farmer a better farmer. Conversely, some said the purpose of education is not to make a farmer a better farmer, but to make a farmer a better person. This is the ideal of "higher education."

Government relations professionals at state institutions must keep this regulating ideal at heart while balancing the diversity of interests that seek to define and regulate public higher education. (e.g., in *Plessy v. Ferguson*,

states and the federal government took its power to the limit for both private and public education). UT's government relations professional(s) play an outsize role in protecting, insuring and advancing the University's character.

### **3) The Role of Government**

Today, American cities are aflame again, going all the way back to The Revolutionary Era. Innocents are dying by the hands of state actors. The National Guard and The Army have been summoned to restore order. Statutes are being toppled. Police brutality is on display.

Police departments are being disbanded and reconstituted (e.g., Camden, New Jersey). The right to protest for right-a Constitutional bedrock-is under extraordinary stress. Laws are being changed to reflect this reality even as we speak. Yet, wisdom born of experience teaches us that every crisis presents challenges and opportunities.

In a free society the role of government is to create the conditions and capacity for society to flourish. Self imposed limits on the exercise of state power are necessary, especially during a crisis. This is done by policy, law, rule, regulation and practice. In the absence of self imposed limits, government undermines the very principles it is sworn to uphold. In this same regard the state ignores the will of the majority at its own peril. The challenge is simple and complex. Nkrumah wrote "One can compromise over programme, but not over principle. Any compromise over principle is the same as abandonment of it."

Higher education, inter alia, trains guardians of individual rights, social, organizational and institutional character, on behalf of society. The checks and balances of our Federal structure; our complex diversity, along with the challenges, opportunities and limits of our past do not make this an easy task in the twenty first century. Therefore, relationship management is a key arch in the government relations infrastructure.

### **4) Relationship Management**

The first lesson of political science is the difference between the way things are and how they appear. In addition to being clear about who you are, the purpose of education, and the role of government, one must have an open, flexible mind to get successful results in government relations.

In this arena competing interests are always at work. One must know all sides of an issue(s) to discuss thoroughly. One must also know whose interests are aligned with the issues. One must be an exceptional communicator to work in government relations. Thereafter your attitude determines your altitude. One is constantly balancing and recalibrating in government relations. An adversary on an issue in the morning may be your advocate in the afternoon.

The government relations professional must also know everything that is to be known about leaders in public service-from birth to the present. When you converse with leaders who govern our country, and have done your homework on them and issues under consideration, you build mutual respect, trust and confidence. Personal ethical honesty and integrity are priceless in life, but especially in government relations. You can agree or disagree, but you learn to value and appreciate diverse perspectives while being civil. Skillful navigation of diverse issues and personalities is the key to effective relationship management. The

**5) Fear and Faith -** Fear knocked at the door, Faith answered, There was no one there  
Strong and active faith are the keys to my career in government relations. Yet, my first encounter with political leaders was intimidating. These women and men were larger than life. The setting and language of politics was vastly different from anything I'd ever known. I asked myself "Why am I here? This is not my world."

Forty two years later I can hardly imagine anything besides government relations. I had singularly exceptional mentors (strangers I might add) who helped me along the way. The halls of The Tennessee General Assembly, several additional state legislatures, and The United States Congress, have consumed my career representing public and private parties interested in government relations. Today I can walk in and engage with just about anyone on almost anything. But what is faith?

“...Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Equipped with nothing more than this and a college degree, I walked into the hallowed halls of government with a sense of awe. These buildings sat atop hills (Nashville). One hundred foot ceilings (Harrisburg) ; Carrera Marble and Tiffany Glass ceilings (Annapolis), with great, grand, noble ideals etched in pediment. Images, statutes, flags (Rhode Island) and scenes that depict triumphant leaders amidst legendary battles and great loss. It can be difficult to see or find one’s way in the presence of a society’s depiction and adoration of greatness. Nevertheless, I learned to walk by faith, not sight. If you can see what you hope for it doesn’t require faith.

The practical, guiding ideal that sustained my faith was from the mentor of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, President Emeritus of Morehouse College:

“You must have a love affair with higher possibilities, always looking for something higher, better, richer, nobler, fuller. Always looking for new worlds to conquer, new mountains to climb, new rivers to cross, new challenges to meet,, and new joys to complete. You must look up and strive, with all of your heart, all of your mind, all of your strength, all of your soul, for something higher and better, and to be better than you are. No person deserves to be congratulated unless he has done the best he could with the mental equipment he has under the existing circumstances. The challenge you must accept, is to keep tiptoeing and never accept mediocrity as a goal. You cannot lose. The future is on your side.”

In summary, government relations in higher education requires knowing one’s self; the purpose of education; the role of government; relationship management skills; and a foundation of strong, active faith. Attached are five examples.

### **THE VOTE**

In 1989 The late Honorable Lois M. DeBerry, Speaker Pro-Tempore of The Tennessee General Assembly, called. She said put your Resume together for a job interview-Press Secretary of The House Democratic Caucus. I prepared my Resume and wore my finest suit to the interview. The vote had to be unanimous. Everyone voted yes except one Representative. Crushed, I told Speaker DeBerry I could return to my job at. Instead, The House Democratic Caucus created a role- Special Assistant to The Speaker Pro-Tempore. The person hired as Press Secretary was a constituent of the Representative who voted against me.

### **CHIP**

The United States Congress created The Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in 1997. The Governor of Tennessee did not share their CHIP plans with anyone. Leaders of The Tennessee General Assembly asked our consulting firm to get involved. The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), forerunner to today’s Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), began the rollout of CHIP by hosting a regional meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. At least five hundred (500) people attended the meeting.

Ms. Rose Hatten was HCFA’s Regional Director. After her remarks microphones were open to the audience. I spoke and said Tennessee’s Administration had not shared their CHIP Plans with The Tennessee Legislature, or anyone for that matter. Unbeknownst to me, a representative from The Governor’s Office was behind me in line. I had never seen or heard of her. She refuted my comments. As the Governor’s representative spoke, another woman in the audience, (but not in line), pointed at me, spoke out of order and said, “Ms. Hatten, that young man is telling the truth.” That woman, also unbeknownst to me, was President of The Tennessee Chapter of The American Academy of Pediatrics. Ms. Hatten gave us Tennessee’s CHIP Plan.

### **RCG**

In 1999 a client referred me to Renal Care Group (RCG) -a Dialysis company. A lunch was scheduled with The Chief Executive Officer, Chief Medical Officer and General Counsel. When I arrived at the office for lunch the receptionist looked at me rather strange. I said I was there to meet Sam, Doug and Raymond. The Receptionist said “That can’t be right.” I said “Please excuse me.” I stepped away, called my office and confirmed the meeting. I returned to the front desk and informed the receptionist that I was in the right place. I was hired at lunch.

## **DISCOUNT**

In 2000 I represented ATM Discount Communications (Discount), a telecommunications company. A growing local reseller in Memphis, Discount faced the market giant, AT&T. The competition with AT&T led to litigation with The Tennessee Public Service Commission, The Court of Appeals and ultimately led to The United States Congress. The President of Discount and I went to Washington to meet The, Ranking Democrat on The House of Commerce Committee.

When we arrived at The Congressman's office we were told he was not in. In classic lobbyist fashion we chose to wait for the Congressman's return. As we sat in the lobby I decided to call a friend I thought might know The Congressman. The person I called just happened to be in Washington, and said stay right there, they were enroute.

When my friend arrived The Congressman came out immediately. He welcomed us into his office. My friend asked about The Congressman's daughter. The Congressman said his daughter was doing great, and thanked my friend for helping her. The Congressman faxed a letter to AT&T immediately.

## **THE FIRST VETO**

In 2012 The Christian Legal Society (CLS) of Vanderbilt University learned it's President was gay, and ousted him. The CLS President appealed to Vanderbilt and his tenure was upheld. Vanderbilt's CLS appealed to The Tennessee General Assembly. Lieutenant Governor Ramsey publicly stated that "Christians are under attack." Legislation was filed forcing state jurisdiction over a private university in the name of religion.

Representatives of all public and private universities worked to stop the bill. The publicity and the legislative debate were great. The late Honorable Deputy Governor Claude Ramsey and I were standing outside The Senate when the bill passed. Governor Ramsey turned to me and said "David, I do not like this. Go downstairs and see Mr. Cate. When the bill passed the House we thought all hope was lost. Governor Haslam made the bill his first veto.



David C. Mills is Director of Health Sciences, Government Relations and Advocacy for The University of Tennessee. David studied history and political science. David has served, inter alia, The Iowa Health Information Network; Nemours Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children; Vanderbilt University; Tennessee State Government; and as a Consultant. David is one of fifteen children born into a family of strong, active faith. David is dad to five children and grandfather to ten. David was elected to Political Office at age twenty-five. David has authored essays, two plays, and a book, *Unholy: The Slaves Bible*. David has lived in Newark, New Jersey; Los Angeles, Oakland, Manteca and San Diego California; Wilmington, Delaware, Knoxville, Nashville and now Memphis Tennessee. David is joyfully married.

# Attracting International Students to Master of Public Administration/Public Policy Programs

Margaret Norris, Municipal Technical Advisory Service

## Introduction

What began as a simple conversation between two friends led to a curious mind that wanted to know more. In November 2019, Interim President Randy Boyd had just taken a delegation of 24 University of Tennessee (UT) faculty/staff/alumni and stakeholders on a trip to Israel to connect UT globally. The conversation began with one of the delegates. The message from [now] President Boyd about “everywhere you look, UT” fit seamlessly with this international trip.

The President further expressed the purpose of the trip in his blog dated December 9, 2019 that stated:

It is essential that U.S. higher education institutions connect and engage in the world to bring the good work of our faculty to the public, to build scientific collaborations that strengthen the impact of our knowledge and to harness opportunities for our students and graduates to grow and learn from a broad canvas of culture and societies. To these ends, our group of 24 lifelong learners visited six top-rated Israeli universities and multiple scientific organizations.

[https://president.tennessee.edu/column/2019/12/global-engagement-in-education/?fbclid=IwAR0wsxIBOwFJ3YceqEGg3d-t9fcTYon9Xgy1y9ntC-AcQcDyrxS\\_tFsIxpM](https://president.tennessee.edu/column/2019/12/global-engagement-in-education/?fbclid=IwAR0wsxIBOwFJ3YceqEGg3d-t9fcTYon9Xgy1y9ntC-AcQcDyrxS_tFsIxpM)

The curiosity began when comparisons were made between two Masters’ programs at the UT and East Tennessee State University (ETSU). If UT was seeking to expand its global presence, what could be learned from ETSU that has a much higher percentage of international students in a comparable graduate degree program? The Institute for Public Service (IPS) at UT has a vital intern placement program that places students from colleges and universities across the states, but primarily in the southeast and predominantly from within the state of Tennessee. In recent history, the only international students in the internship program originated from the ETSU academic program.

## Methodology

Two interviews were conducted with program directors at UT and ETSU. At UT, the Director of the Master of Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) is David Folz. At ETSU, Dr. Frederick Gordon is the director of the Master of Public Administration Program (MPA). Both gentlemen are critical to the success of the IPS internship program and were willing participants for interviews.

## Interview Results

Dr. Folz has been with UT and the political science department for his entire academic career and has served as the director of the MPPA program since 2012. When asked about the history of the program, particularly as it relates to international students, he said “Over thirty years, maybe there have been a dozen to fifteen international students.” There had been a handful of students from Korea, and occasionally students would come from China, Africa, and the Middle East.

When Dr. Gordon was asked the same question, he replied that he has been with ETSU for approximately one year and didn’t have a lot of history to share; yet he expounded that 45% of the MPA students at ETSU are international. He continued to elaborate that the MPA program used to get a lot of students from China, and recently there has been a shift to more students attending from West Africa. Additionally, he mentioned that many of the program’s international graduate students had previously been ETSU undergraduate student athletes from Argentina and Columbia.

The next question posed to both professors was: is your program’s international recruitment efforts intentional or organic? Dr. Folz replied that there is no active recruitment program to attract international students. The program places an advertisement in a domestic professional journal, and that is the extent of marketing. Dr. Gordon stressed that international students seek out ETSU’s MPA program rather than the other way around. He offered that the graduate school has hired consultants to study growth in the school, particularly with the

forced move to online instruction due to COVID-19. Both professors suggested that their only real outreach to international students is the availability of a webpage and they rely upon strong word of mouth.

UT: <https://gradschool.utk.edu/graduate-student-life/international-graduate-students/>

ETSU: <https://www.etsu.edu/international/documents/internationalstudentguide.pdf>

The next question delved into the success of international students. Dr. Gordon contended that the success depends upon the individual student, and not the nationality of the student. He did offer however, that the English used in Africa is different; and he's coached many students to bring them to standards in American English. Given the small number of students from UT over the years, this question was omitted for Dr. Folz.

Both professors were questioned about the benefits of having international students in the classroom. Similar answers were received: the benefit is both for the experience of the international student learning American culture and politics, and for the domestic students who may not have previously encountered foreign students. Learning works both ways; and sharing of perspectives on democracy is invaluable to both sets of students. Furthermore, having a greater diversity in the classroom leads to better debate and discussion on topics and issues. Each set of students learns new perspectives on how each other's governments function.

The largest differences between the two programs became apparent when the conversation switched to funding. ETSU offers many full tuition waivers for all students with a background in American government and/or public policy whereas UT's MPA program offers no tuition waivers. Dr. Folz offered his estimation as to why policy is written this way. He suggested that historically the university had offered scholarships and the international students did not show up/arrive on campus to attend classes.

## Conclusion

As with any bottom-line discussion, it drills down to the money. It's all about the money. ETSU has a more successful international recruitment result in its MPA program mostly because it offers scholarships and tuition waivers for which international students may apply and compete with domestic students. UT's MMPA program does not.

To bring the study full circle, one of the reasons for the UT Israeli trip (suggested by the friend/delegate on the trip) was that international tuition is more profitable for the university. In researching UT's admission fees, this appears to be a highly accurate statement. In-state tuition for Fall 2019 + Spring 2020 (combined) undergraduate school is \$13,380 compared to \$31,798 for out-of-state. If one of the incentives for the foreign excursion was to recruit higher dollar students, then it would be counterintuitive to waive those fees via UT offered scholarships. Therefore, if UT's MMPA program would like to replicate the international recruitment successes of ETSU's MPA program, it should consider exploring funding mechanisms for tuition waivers/scholarship opportunities to international students.



Margaret Norris is the Executive Director for the Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS), housed in the Institute for Public Service. She has been with MTAS for eighteen years, serving her first sixteen years as a Municipal Management Consultant before accepting the challenge of her current position in August of 2017.

Prior to joining MTAS in 2001, Margaret once worked for the agency as a graduate intern. Her other experience includes work in Chattanooga, Tennessee; Kansas City, Missouri; South Pittsburg Tennessee; and Lumberton, North Carolina. She loves cities and helping municipalities serve their customers. She believes in the aphorism: "Do what you can, where you are, with what you have."

Margaret graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with dual degrees in Psychology and Spanish and earned a Master of Public Administration from UT Chattanooga. She served as the Executive Director of the Tennessee City Management Association from 2004-2008. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the Tennessee City Management Association, and the International City/County Management Association. She is also a registered member of the National Association of Parliamentarians

# Linking Employee Engagement to Organizational Performance in Higher Education

Laure Pou, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

## Introduction

Identifying influencers of organizational performance to harness those capabilities and propel organizational achievement is understandably attractive to organizations across all industries. However, researchers and practitioners to date have been inconclusive with respect to identifying specific organizational practices, such as human resource management (HRM) strategies, that may influence performance of higher education institutions. Without understanding if HRM strategy truly can result in predicted outcomes or what practices may determine outcomes, there may be a reduced ability for organizations to understand the needed investment in strategic HRM and how a change in resources may impact organizational results.

Researchers have proposed that a potential competitive advantage in achieving broader organizational performance is to first direct efforts towards enhancing employee engagement among employees through organizational support and HR strategies (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Such researchers have contended that employees reporting high engagement also report enhanced performance both within their assigned organizational roles and among roles that extend beyond their assigned work, referenced as organizational citizenship behaviors (Reece, Rausch, Tucker, Crawford, & Roush, 2018). Organizational citizenship behaviors can be described as the discretionary effort that employees put into their work that exceeds expectations and may drive organizational performance factors such as customer satisfaction, customer retention, and so forth.

## Statement of the Problem

Central to this concept is the idea that organizational-wide HR systems and practices affect the individual behaviors and attitudes of employees, which then affect HR outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, engagement, etc.) that influence organizational performance outcomes (Paauwe, 2009). Although the collective findings of prior empirical research have concluded that HRM strategy adds value and can influence organizational performance (Paauwe & Boselie, 2005), there is less conclusive research and application-based evidence related to the relationship between HRM, such as employee engagement efforts, and organizational performance, including understanding the mechanisms through which this relationship takes place (Patrick M Wright & Nishii, 2007).

Numerous studies have focused on the relationship between HRM strategy and organizational performance since Guest's (1987) original publication, but few have examined this relationship within a higher education setting to provide practical guidance towards implementation. Understanding the employee engagement relationship with higher education organizational performance may assist in implementing or sustaining success-oriented practices that enable institutions to provide services needed to positively influence student related outcomes. and assist in elevating the ability for higher education institutions to support students in achieving college degrees.

## Suggested Solutions

### *Organizational Performance*

Enterprise leaders must identify what organizational outcomes are of importance so efforts can be focused specifically on understanding the factors that contribute to such performance. Although this seems like an obvious first step in generating solutions towards elevating organizational performance, if desired performance outcomes are not clearly communicated and understood by all employees then individual discretionary efforts may vary and goal-oriented behaviors may be misaligned with the mission of the institution regardless of how engaged or satisfied an employee may report being among assessment efforts. Performance outcomes may vary among higher education institutions from student enrollment to student graduation rates. Consideration of organizational performance may be defined by the funding model of public state-funded institutions such as The University of Tennessee: <https://www.tn.gov/thec/for-institutions/funding-information-for-institutions.html>.

### *Student Engagement*

For higher education institutions identifying student graduation rates as a key performance indicator, as an example, understanding factors influencing student satisfaction and engagement may be a critical component in supporting student persistence towards degree completion. This relationship mirrors that of employee engagement and organizational performance. If student graduation is identified as an institutional priority and performance measure, then we must understand influencers and disruptors in the student life cycle. Measuring student satisfaction and engagement has become a widely utilized practice among higher education institutions and organizations like Gallup offer survey measurements and consultative services for data-driven decision making. Although Gallup is not the only resource for student engagement measures, keeping abreast of the practices of industry leaders in this realm is of critical importance for higher education administrators who may be distanced from frontline engagement with student populations. For many institutions, the possibility of utilizing internal faculty expertise to assess student engagement is a powerful resource that may be overlooked. As with any measurement tool, the impact comes from action taken based on the results, which may be understanding what discretionary efforts of faculty and staff are needed to positively influence student engagement and persistence towards degree completion.

### *Employee Engagement*

Gallup, ModernThink, and McLean & Company are only a few examples of organizational development (OD) companies that provide consultative services to higher education institutions among a variety of HRM practices, such as employee engagement. Regularly assessing employee engagement and understanding HR practices that influence these employee-level outcomes may assist higher education institutions in establishing HR-related strategies that support a thriving workforce, and in turn support our students in ways necessary to achieve important organizational outcomes. Although utilizing third-party companies to manage engagement efforts is a popular practice across most industries, high education institutions are unique in often having internal expertise among faculty that can drive such efforts in a more cost-efficient manner.

### **Recommended Implementation**

Ultimately, A key element of understanding the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance in higher education is to first to define desired organizational performance outcomes. Once institutional performance priorities are established, measuring and understanding factors that influence such organizational outcomes are a necessity. When employees understand the institutional priorities and factors that influence desired performance outcomes, an engaged workforce will be equipped with the knowledge necessary to execute goal-directed behavior. However, a key component in this series of steps will be administrators who assess and understand employee engagement beyond only conversations and focus instead on action necessary to support engagement and redirect performance the contradicts employee expectations.

### **Conclusion**

The competitive landscape of higher education is changing, and many institutions are being challenged with continuing to defend the value of a college degree while meeting financial performance outcomes. Harnessing the power of our biggest asset, our human resources, and linking employee engagement to organizational performance may be a key to long-term survival.

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Laure Pou is Assistant Vice Chancellor, Human Resources, UT Chattanooga. She has a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Auburn University and a master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC). Laure joined the UTC Office of Human Resources (HR) in 2009 after completing her master's degree. She was appointed as Executive Director of Human Resources in 2016 and now currently serves as the Assistant Vice Chancellor. Her role includes responsibility for leadership of the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) at UTC. Laure strives in her role to provide strategic, effective, and innovative services to campus. She enjoys serving her campus community in Chattanooga and collaborating across the UT System to advance the services of HR and OEI, as well as the higher education mission of the University of Tennessee. Laure is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Learning and Leadership and plans to graduate in 2020.

# Solving the Problem of Assessing Potential for Successful Enterprise Leaders

Blake Reagan, University of Tennessee System Administration

One of the emerging crises in higher education is having the best leadership possible to address challenging wicked problems and to navigate an ever-changing environment. Compounding this crisis is an impending need for leaders, particularly in top ranks. An often-quoted statistic from the American Council on Education reported 58 percent of today's college presidents are over the age of 61. If just half of those presidents chose to retire in the next five years, a quarter of college presidencies—approximately 1,000 positions—would become vacant.<sup>1</sup> Add to that number the vice presidents/chancellors, deans, and executive-level positions in the same age cohort and one can easily arrive at a number in the six figures for positions that will turnover in a relatively brief time. For the University of Tennessee, the challenge is real: Of the 103 senior leaders across the UT System, 38.8 percent are eligible or will be eligible for retirement in the next five years.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this layer of responsibility is a deep stack of others within the System whose leadership we rely on to meet our mission. The University of Tennessee has approximately 3,100 people in leadership positions (defined as having at least one person reporting to them)<sup>3</sup>.

The added challenge is not just finding leaders for all these levels but finding the right leaders. Effective leadership is essential to any well-functioning organization. After all, leadership is the “single greatest reason behind the success of any team.”<sup>4</sup> Notably, according to data presented by Claudio Fernández-Aráoz, Andres Roscoe, and Kentaro Aramaki, in a recent *Harvard Business Review* report, only 13% of senior executives had confidence in the rising leadership at their firms<sup>5</sup>. A recent Gartner survey showed that 81% of HR leaders cited lack of readiness as a top reason that high-potential candidates were unable to fill leadership positions.<sup>6</sup> Readiness requires devoting more time focusing on evaluating and developing future leaders can produce significant returns. If properly developed, a bench of enterprise leaders can boost performance returns by 22%.<sup>7</sup>

Preparing effective leaders requires more than the common practice of placing people into leadership positions based narrowly on past performance, job-based skills, or education<sup>8</sup>. What appears to be missing, are systematic understandings of the fit between leadership skills and the positions they will hold. To address this gap, as well as provide a framework for ongoing evaluation as well as development for future promotion, a new leadership assessment and development model is presented for adoption by the University System.

The model presented here is based on the seminal work of Claudio Fernández-Aráoz, Andres Roscoe, and Kentaro Aramaki as previously cited in the *Harvard Business Review*. The key outcome of their model, and desired result for UT, is how to align current talent with proper assessment and development tools that effectively prepare people to continually advance within the university's hierarchy and predictively perform at the highest level required for each successive step.

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<sup>1</sup> Gailda Pitre Davis “Preparing Leaders for the Future,” American Council on Education, December 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph DiPietro “Succession Planning,” Email to Senior University of Tennessee Leadership, Wednesday, June 08, 2016 1:19 PM.

<sup>3</sup> Email exchange with Ashlie Cxyz, Director of Human Resources Programs and Executive Recruiter For The University Of Tennessee System

<sup>4</sup> Extreme Ownership, location 243 of 4365.

<sup>5</sup> Claudio Fernández-Aráoz, Andres Roscoe, and Kentaro Aramaki, “Turning Potential into Success: The Missing Link in Leadership Development,” *Harvard Business Review*, November-December 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Baker, “5 Succession Risks That Threaten Your Leadership Strategy,” Gartner, Inc. January 29, 2020, (<https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/5-succession-risks-that-threaten-your-leadership-strategy/>)

<sup>7</sup> “Developing Enterprise Leaders, CEB HRShare, April 29, 2015 (Now Gartner, Inc.).

<sup>8</sup> Rennie, Jon. *I Have the Watch: Becoming a Leader Worth Following*. Deck & Conn, LLC. Kindle Edition.

Ideally, the model will provide a rubric for understanding leadership expectations for successive higher levels of administration aligned with the competencies needed to perform. In addition, the unique value of the Fernández-Aráoz, Roscoe, and Aramaki model is the predictors they found that drove outstanding performance across the competencies. With such a model, the university would be able to (1) understand the leadership needs for different levels of responsibility; (2) provide a prototype for evaluating talent based on the competencies for each leadership position; and (3) have a basis for setting development goals to assure the highest levels of performance for different hierarchies. This paper presents their model (with appropriate adaptations) for implementation across the University of Tennessee.

The base of the authors' model begins with common competencies. In a separate article, they defined eight common competencies:<sup>9</sup>

1. **Results orientation:** "A commitment to demonstrably improving key business metrics."
2. **Strategic orientation:** "The capacity to engage in broad, complex analytical and conceptual thinking."
3. **Collaboration and influence:** "An ability to work effectively with peers or partners, including those not in the line of command."
4. **Team leadership:** "Success in focusing, aligning, and building effective groups."
5. **Developing organization capabilities:** "A drive to improve the company by attracting and developing top talent."
6. **Change leadership:** "The capacity to transform and align an organization around a new goal."
7. **Market understanding:** "A strong understanding of the market and how it affects the business."
8. **Inclusiveness:** Aware of biases; creates a shared identity and sense of purpose; attentive to emotions.

Accepting the competencies as the framework for desired leadership, the next step is to construct a rubric that assess the levels of performance ranging from the baseline of accepted behavior up through demonstration of extraordinary behavior. The authors offered their matrix for how this evaluation would look. For the purposes of translating this to the University of Tennessee System, I used the rubric with the exception of the seventh trait, which they listed as "Market Understanding," and I have adapted as "higher education knowledge." This change underscores an important point throughout this example: the competencies and the rubric for assessing different levels of achievement are adaptable to the unique circumstances of the position.

To implement an approach based on the above, a coach/mentor/supervisor (collectively, "coach") would first need to understand the position that they are evaluating. What does the position do, what must the person know to succeed in the position, how much responsibility does the position have, etc.? The coach will need to understand the outcomes and behaviors that would result in certain scores on Table 1. If the coach is not familiar with the position, the coach could benchmark by reaching out to peer institutions and speaking to people in similar roles. The coach could also review publications from industry groups.

The coach will need to determine the range of acceptable performance on each row for Table 1. See Table 2 for an example. The coach will need to keep in mind that there are no perfect leaders, and that the institution's expectations and needs for performance in a given position will vary based on the level of the position (with lower level leadership positions generally requiring less from the individual in the position).

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<sup>9</sup> Claudio Fernandez-Araoz, "21st-Century Talent Spotting: Why potential now trumps brains, experience, and 'competencies,'" Harvard Business Review, June 2014.

Table 1

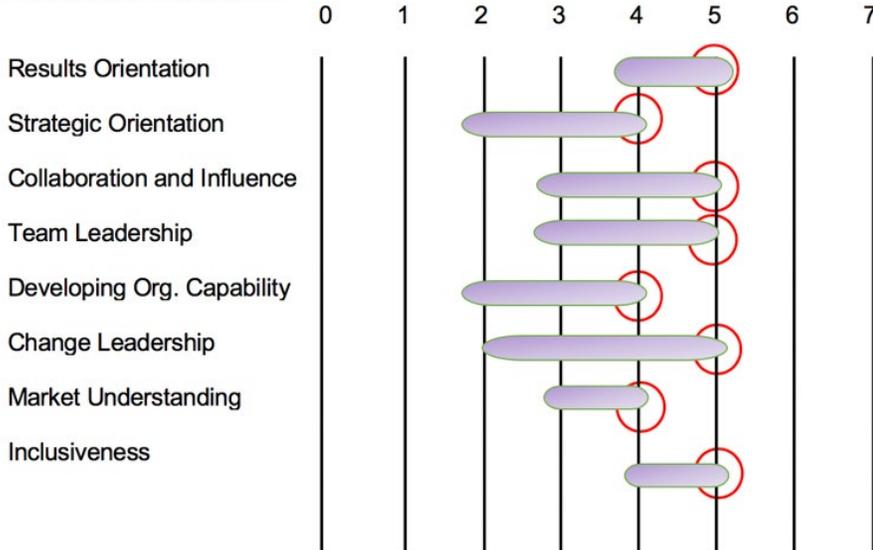
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Results Orientation</b>	Completes assignments	Works to make things better	Achieves goals	Exceeds goals	Improves company's practices and performance	Redesigns practices for breakthrough results	Transforms business model
<b>Strategic Orientation</b>	Understands immediate issues	Defines plan within larger strategy	Sets multiyear priorities	Defines multi-year strategy for own area	Changes business strategy in multiple areas	Creates high-impact corporate strategy	Develops breakthrough corporate strategy
<b>Collaboration and Influence</b>	Responds to requests	Supports colleagues	Actively engages with colleagues	Motivates others to work with self	Facilitates cross-group collaboration	Establishes collaborative culture	Forges transform-ational partnerships
<b>Team Leadership</b>	Directs work	Explains what to do and why	Gets input from team	Inspires team commitment	Empowers teams to work independently	Motivates diverse teams to perform	Builds high-performance culture
<b>Developing Organizational Capabilities</b>	Supports development efforts	Encourages others to develop	Actively supports team members' growth	Systematically builds team's capability	Aids development outside team	Builds organizational capability	Instills culture focused on talent management
<b>Change Leadership</b>	Accepts change	Supports change	Points out need for change	Makes compelling case for change	Mobilizes others to initiate change	Drives firmwide momentum for change	Embeds culture of change
<b>Higher education knowledge</b>	Knows immediate context	Knows general higher education basics	Investigates market and customer dynamics	Deeply understands higher ed	Generates insights about higher ed's future	Identifies emerging business opportunities	Sees how to transform industry
<b>Inclusiveness</b>	Accepts different views	Understands diverse views	Integrates other points of view	Functions well across diverse groups	Facilitates engagement between factions	Strategically increases employee diversity	Creates inclusive culture

Evaluators need to determine on-par scores for each competency: What is the desired level of performance across the scale for this position? An important key to the success of using this rubric is to be rigorous in the assessment. No leader is perfect, and the authors' found in a study of 5,000 executives at 47 companies that only 1% of leaders had an average proficiency score of 6 or better; only 11% had an average score of 5. The authors also found that leaders might have stand-out scores in only 2 or 3 areas, and above-par in the rest.

In the example below, I've taken the position of Director of Procurement Services and identified the desired levels of competence (red circle) and then the acceptable range of competence (purple shade) as follows:

Table 2: sample scores

**Director of Procurement**



In coaching a hypothetical director of procurement, I would assess where they are for each competency and we discuss the gap between that assessment and the desired level. Using the language of the rubric, it is reasonably clear to see where the person is performing and the expectations necessary to move to the desired state. Those expectations then become the strategies for improvement, making this entire process developmental rather than disciplinary. The person being rated can readily see what is necessary for improvement.

To maximize the effectiveness of the discussion around Table 2, a supervisor and an employee will need to familiarize themselves with Table 1 and understand how Table 1 fits into the employee's current job. The supervisor will also need to understand the employee's plans for the future. By knowing both the employee's current job and the employee's plans for the future, the supervisor can assess the employee's current leadership abilities and identify areas for improvement. Perhaps more importantly, the supervisor can determine the employee's readiness for higher-level positions. To help inform the supervisor on the employee's current job, the employee could perform a self-assessment using Table 1 to provide the employee's self-assessed score on Table 2.

If the University of Tennessee System had competency matrices for each position, in support of job descriptions, the path of leadership would be clearer and the means for advancing along that path would be more developmental than contentious. Having such matrices would allow those employees who want to be in a leadership position to understand, in clear terms, what traits and skills they need to be successful in a leadership position.

The possible uses are numerous. The most obvious is that the current evaluations are transformed into productive conversations about where improvements can be made and what those expectations look like when achieved. In considering career goals, the evaluator could provide two sets of responses: One for the current position and one for the aspirational position. Now the person knows what is expected for the current position and then the performance requirements for their aspirational position. In job searches, the committee could use the rubric for assessing candidates against the job *performance* expectations instead of only addressing resume entries of job tasks. The committee could use behavioral interview techniques to determine a candidate's abilities.

Looking at the bigger picture, by publishing something similar to Table 1, the University will allow current and future leaders to have a common understanding of what the University expects. Moreover, future leaders will especially benefit because they would be able to make choices related to training and education to allow them to put themselves in the best position possible to be effective leaders, when a leadership position is available.



Blake Reagan is a Tennessee native, and longtime resident of Knoxville. Blake has a B.A. in Political Science, and a J.D. (graduate law degree), both from UT Knoxville. Blake is the director of procurement services for The University of Tennessee's System Administration procurement office (purchasing and contracts). He has co-authored two books and is currently working on a third book. He enjoys public speaking and has spoken at multiple national and regional conferences. Blake enjoys professional and personal development, and he spend significant amounts of free time reading, listening to podcasts or audiobooks, and taking online courses. He has spent more than a decade studying standard English contract drafting skills, and he enjoys drafting and reviewing contracts. On the personal side, Blake has a strong passion for physical fitness and nutrition: he works out 6-7 days per week, usually twice per day.

# The Threat to Institutions of Higher Education in a Post Covid-19 Society

*Shadow Robinson, The University of Tennessee at Martin*

## Introduction

The future of institutions of higher education depend on many varied factors many of which were under pressure before COVID-19. Fiscally, most institutions of higher education depend on a combination undergraduate enrollment (tuition, fees, room & board) and state allocations as their largest sources of revenue. That enrollment stream is under increasing pressures. In the public sphere where perception heavily influences state support and philanthropy, the value of the college degree has come under increasing scrutiny even as educational costs have inarguably risen. This leads many to question “Is College Worth It?” The economic impact of COVID-19 will exert enormous pressures on nearly every industry, but higher education is especially exposed due to the previously existing pressures, the immediate cultural and financial impact of COVID-19, and the ongoing health risks of COVID-19 absent an effective mitigating treatment or vaccine.

## Problem statement

Higher education as an industry was under threat before COVID-19. If the value and relevancy of institutions of higher education were in doubt before, what now?

“This is an existential time for higher education.”

This was the opening response in a recent interview in the Chronicle of Higher Education with E. Gordon Gee, currently president at the University of West Virginia, previously heading the University of Colorado at Boulder, Ohio State University (twice), Brown University, and Vanderbilt University. He would later add, “I think a thousand institutions are going to fail over the next couple of years.” [1]

His concern about the threats to higher education is not unique. Clayton Christensen of Harvard Business School and Michael Horn of Forbes Magazine have been bearish on the future of higher education institutions for some time well before COVID-19 with Christensen widely cited for his claim that half of all institutions would close within a decade [2]. Their reasons have been primarily twofold: the economics of the business model for higher education and the coming demographics shift of the college going population [3]. The demographic shift has been widely reported upon in higher education circles with Nathan Grawe’s “Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education” being a wide ranging and cohesive examination [4].

While few prognosticators have been as grim in their pronouncements as Christensen & Horn, they have not been alone. Richard Vedder [5] is another economist that seeks a grim future for the industry. Moody’s has been warning of the issues with the business model in the private college sector for some time and the bond rating agency’s indicated negative pressure on the higher education enterprise would be a global phenomenon, impacting endowment return, international student interest, the ability of families to pay, and substantial cuts to government funding of education. [6,7,8].

And in the wake of COVID-19, the National Governors’ Association in partnership with New America released a guide to the states on their role in protecting students and managing institutional closure. While released after the COVID-19 outbreak, the study had been undertaken even before the outbreak, highlighting how perilous many states view the financial standing of institutions of higher education even before the pandemic. And now as their report states that the COVID-19 “crisis presents an unprecedented emergency for the financial health of higher education institutions.” [9]

An important but potentially terrifying side note: The demographic decline in the traditional college age population occurring in 2026 arose in large part from a response to the Great Recession in 2008. If a widely predicted COVID-19 recession hits with a similar vengeance, will the higher education institutions that survive the 2026 cliff be any better prepared having seen the impact of the 2008 recession? Institutions of higher education must not only try to survive 2020, be mindful of the demographic downturn in 2026, and vigilantly

monitor that 2038-40 could represent another significant downturn beyond the new lower numbers in the traditional age college going populations.

Further threats beyond the demographic challenge is that many of the traditional age college students do not think College is all that valuable to their future.

In the same interview with the Chronicle, President Gee goes on to share “When I became a university president in 1981, there was a public survey showing that 95 percent of people in this country thought higher education was important. It’s now fallen below 50 percent”

The decline seems to be accelerating as seen in a 2019 Gallup poll [10]. In 2013, Gallup found that 70% of U.S. adults considered a college education to be “very important,” 23% felt it was “fairly important” and 6% said it was “not too important.”

In 2019, those figures have shifted to 51%, 36% and 13%, respectively. The biggest shift can be seen among young adults between the ages of 18 and 29. In 2013, 74% of Americans in this age group said college was “very important,” but by 2019, only 41% said the same thing.

So it is perhaps unsurprising that in light of great uncertainty that many high school students are likely to change their college plans, either the choice of institution or whether to attend at all according to initial survey data from Simpson Scarborough [11] and Strada’s ongoing work [12]. (For a discussion of the Strada results at the end of April 2020 at the time see [13]).

It is not just the students who doubt the true value of the college degree, George Mason professor of economics Bryan Caplan argues that much of higher education is inefficient and has only a small effect in improving human capital, contrary to the conventional consensus in labor economics. He further argues that the economic factor is primarily one of signaling to potential employers [14]. Some of his arguments grow out of earlier research by Arum and Roksa [15] in “Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses” where a large scale study raised serious doubts that students were learning anything measurable in the courses outside of upper level courses in highly specialized majors.

While some efforts have been made at both improving and measuring student’s learning (See the VALUE initiative by AAC&U as an important example [16]), it has been the economic factor that has traditionally remained a robust one. Arguments that college has remained worth the investment by looking at the economic outcomes of graduates compared to those with some or no college has continued to win support across social, political, and ideological lines. This has led to efforts from both sides of the aisle to raise the number of adults with associate degrees at both the federal [17] and state levels [18]. The argument has been supported both in 2014 Bureau of Labor Statistics research [19] and in 2016 College Board report [20].

Now, even that economic argument has fallen into question. In a recent journal article published in the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review, [21] “Is College Still Worth It? The New Calculus of Falling Returns”. Their findings are rather discouraging. Their analysis is technical but the line “Among all racial and ethnic groups born in the 1980s, only the wealth premium for white four-year college graduates remains statistically significant” is only one of a number of important takeaways which challenge the economic narrative on the value and relevancy of our institutions of higher education. The economic impact of COVID-19 is likely to intensify the financial pressures that have led to these conclusions.

### **Suggested solutions**

In many ways higher education is like any other industry, its various institutions sometimes collaborating sometimes competing with one another. Higher education is certainly not the first industry to come under potentially existential threat, and it will not be the last. Higher education as a whole and individual institutions that face immediate existential threats can draw from many examples any number of other industries for insights in how to plan and act to ensure their future.

This alone is a brave and dangerous act as any language that draws from business will tap into deep vein of distrust relating to corporate vs academic models [22] and campus leaders will have to be careful regarding the potential hazards of even engaging lessons from the non-academic world in an academic setting. I would highlight both a small business analogue and a large business one to develop some of the opportunities available for higher education in general.

For my small business analogue I highlight a recent online discussion on his concept of “The Smallest Viable Audience”, where noted marketer Seth Goldin bluntly suggested for small business competing with larger ones that “If you make something people neither need nor want, you should make something else....get back to the first idea, the reason we started something. You don’t get to say ‘Hey, I worked really hard on this, don’t buy from my competitors...it matters to me to buy from me.’ No one would listen to you.” [23]

In seeking to ensure the relevancy, value, and vitality of our institutions of higher education, institutions must ask who do we matter to and how/why? The relativity similar appearance and function of so many institutions of higher education, the similar experiences across so many campuses can lead institutions to (again borrowing the words of Goldin) “make average stuff for average people” and in reaching the largest possible audience, you run into “the problem with the largest possible audience is you can’t reach them, you can’t delight them, you can’t matter to them.” [24]

In addition to having some flavor of the “we have worked hard to build this institution so please come here instead of go there” mindset, campuses in general have not tried to “find an audience of people who, if they were to care about you, if they were to embrace you, if they were to dance with you, it would be sufficient to propel you to the next step, *begin there*.” and have too often been “making average stuff for average people” In reminding ourselves of why we started these institutions, I believe in the broad sense institutions were started for and better matter to its students and the local communities that hold the institution. Some institutions, the nationally recognized brands or land grant institutions were started with or have evolved in purpose to also serve society at large. The individual mix of these would vary by institutional type and mission but losing focus on them will cost institutions dearly.

We need to understand what matters to and what is meant by “our students” in a way have not before. Our students come with a wide range of abilities and expectations, but nearly all of them expect their experience to lead them to a career that can support them as they grow.

We need to understand that the economic argument of “trust us, it will help you get a job” has lost its luster. In a recent report on Adult learners [25] which represent a growing proportion of the student body available for institutions of higher education, EAB observed “Adult learners require a return on their education. Before enrolling, students want evidence that the investment they will make in their education will result in a substantial, positive impact on their lifestyle.” This is increasing true of students as whole. Furthermore, the data showed that adult learners are extremely pragmatic and require flexible options. We are seeing a growth of the same mindset in the traditional college age population and as the children of the adult learner segment enter the college marketplace, it is increasingly certain that those students will more and more expect the same return on investment and flexibility.

Our institutions must graduate students who not only are consistently well positioned and prepared to find meaningful jobs and careers, but those jobs should often land within the geographical region the institutions serve. As Goldin shares for businesses, and as higher ed leaders (at least for publics) see play out in legislatures across the country, there are few more important things than having a number of people who deeply care about you, what you do, and want you to succeed. If institutions’ graduates have to consistently leave the region which the institution serves, it will not only bleed the intellectual capital of the region, but in time lose the support of the civic leaders who are vital to the public narrative that drives an institution’s to that next step.

Institutions that have or aspire to the highest levels of research, and to be those institutions with a national brand and global reach need to not only juggle these concerns, but will have to consistently message

themselves in light of those priorities, while not forgetting their responsibilities to their students and the communities which house them. Looking to "advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare" may sound like something more than a University can or could take on, but it is the original National Science Foundation mission. If institutions who operate in that sphere cannot carry that narrative, that support which is so crucial to both the functioning of the University and the country will fade, taking the institution with it towards irrelevance. As a large business case study analogue, I choose Blockbuster as a starting point referencing several interrelated companies. The value is in part because the major players are widely known and in part because it has been studied and written about so extensively that the case studies already available are extensive and insightful. I here mention briefly two of the many lenses through which it might prove insightful for higher education leaders to study to Blockbuster.

One, it is of note that at its peak, Blockbuster earned an enormous amount of its revenue by charging its customers late fees. By the time it had reached its most dominant position, this had become an important part of Blockbuster's revenue model. [26]

At the time of its peak revenue and profits, Blockbuster's business model that had become deeply reliant on charging customers for things unrelated to what the customers sought. A model extensively dependent upon penalizing the very customers you rely on for income is ripe for significant competitive risk if someone could deliver what the customers wanted (movies/games/entertainment) without the penalty of the late fee. (Enter Netflix.) To what extent higher education has a business model that depends on sources of income unrelated to what the student is seeking is one ready for exploration, we must hope it is not only as some part of the post mortem for the industry. The combination of a morass of course fee structures, costs for text books and ancillary materials, tuition increases that are not known before hand, residency requirements generating room and board revenue, and many more might seem more than familiar to members of the Blockbuster accounting department.

A second lens of significant interest is that one could in a narrow sense think that the Blockbuster was a video rental store and that its ending is the natural evolution of the market, its market share eroding as a new model took its place and then ask if the model of higher education is under similar threat?

I suggest in a broader sense, Blockbuster was in the home entertainment business and its combination of inaction and certainty in their model led to their demise. Leaders of higher education would be wise to ask themselves, what broadly speaking what is it they offer students, communities, and society at large and are they approaching change with the same certainty in their model, even hubris as Blockbuster. Blockbuster, at its peak in 2004 had 9,000 stores, 60,000 employees, and annual revenue of \$6 billion dollars. Now, sixteen years later, people are watching their TV's and consuming more non-cable broadcast material than ever before. Where is Blockbuster in this? There is exactly one Blockbuster left on the planet. (It's in Bend, Oregon. [27].)

Blockbuster passed on buying Netflix in 2000 [28]. In 2004, while near its peak but sensing the risk of Netflix, though too late to buy it, the CEO of Blockbuster who had passed 4 years earlier, made an effort to cut out the late fees and launch a competing streaming service. It was too late, Netflix had the customer base, word of mouth, and momentum of customers who were committed to the brand. Added to that the board and investors quickly lost patience with the loss of profitability during the attempted shift in strategy. A year later the new initiatives were shut down as the CEO was forced out. In five more years, Blockbuster declared bankruptcy. In a late effort to find a new business model, Blockbuster did try to buy Circuit City for \$1 billion in 2008. By that time, Circuit City itself was foundering, losing out to Best Buy in every meaningful metric. (Circuit City at one time had over 1500 stores but would close its last doors in March 2009.)

By the time Circuit City closed its doors due to the rise of Best Buy and Circuit City's own missteps, Best Buy was already in what increasingly appeared to be a fatal battle with Amazon. But unlike Circuit City and Blockbuster, Best Buy managed to reinvent itself [29], surviving, as of 2020, the competition with the online giant Amazon (which it should be remembered started itself as an online bookstore but also managed to find new strategies along its way).

Just as Amazon did not become the major force in global commerce by remaining a bookstore, Best Buy did not survive Amazon's onslaught by thinking its goal was to win the PC sales competition with Circuit City/CompUSA or the CD/DVD sales competitions with Columbia House.

Best Buy's strategies included a focus on investing in its people, becoming more nimble, working in partnership with potential competitors (even very direct competitors such as allowing Amazon mini-boutiques in the stores) and increasing its focus on the experience of its customers with the Geek Squad. (AutoZone Bill Rhodes CEO recently highlighted in remarks this same customer experience focus as how AutoZone has continued to thrive while in price competition with Amazon and other aftermarket auto part retailers [30])

Higher Education as a whole, and individual institutions, have opportunities across all the areas highlighted above. There remains in many sectors of higher ed a belief that the current model is the right one, as for Blockbuster. Institutions could learn from the efforts to become nimbler and more collaborative such as BestBuy, invest in its people to develop the talent base, while improving focus on the experience of the the students that enter the institution (a hall mark of AutoZone).

In the coming aftermath of whatever higher education looks like in 20 years, there will be leaders who passed on the winning idea or got on board too late as at Blockbuster, a few institutions who are wildly successful while looking nothing like they had initially such as Amazon, and institutions who will have made subtle but crucial and timely change to survive the change finding their best path forward such as Best Buy.

### **Recommended implementation**

To address the existential challenge ahead, institutions need to better understand what their students, local communities, and broader society need from them and their ability to meet that need.

To have students be a passionate part of their "smallest viable audience", the value proposition must be made clearer to the students. This includes some combination of cost certainty, cost clarity, and a more cohesive narrative of the value of taking on those costs.

A business model that is dependent on students and their families taking on substantial costs, that change over the course of the education in an unknown way, and has unclear outcomes is a business model that is exposed to far more significant risks than the one that contributed to Blockbuster's demise. Whether the solution to this is an income share agreement where students pay back the cost of tuition depending on future earnings [31], greater collaboration with companies to offer education tied to direct employment, or a massive public investment into higher education to remove the exposure to debt [32], higher education will be on an endangered list as long as its current business model persists.

The one size fits all approach to students (i.e. you should be 18-22, available most of a 4 year period from August-May, largely during the day) is increasingly going to impede progress for higher education if as many predictions indicate the adult learner market will grow to be as significant as if not more so than the traditional age undergraduate market at a large number of institutions.

The need to understand our students differently extends to what graduation means. The successful future university will blur the lines between student and alumni, offering graduated professionals "just in time education" opportunities to learn new skills and ways of approaching the modern and professional world, while utilizing those same professionals for mentoring and professional connections for the students earlier in their educational journey. The idea of "students for life" came out of a Georgia Tech [33] group seeking to predict the higher education of 2040. With the external pressures on the industry, I do not think we all will have 20 years to get there.

Except in the case of a few national brand universities, the fiercest, most loyal defenders of the value of an institution must be its local community. If the local community which the institution serves does not love it, the institution is careening towards disaster.

To that end, I feel institutions of higher ed must not just graduate students who can find meaningful careers, but that the institutions should work to have that match occur in the local community as often as possible. If the industry's that our students wish to work in do not exist locally, the University should be working to either recruit or help a graduate start one. A healthy vibrant university is not only creating opportunities for its graduates but for its entire region. Towards this end, several education leaders have begun to promote the idea of a comiversity [34], seeking to more closely integrate educational opportunities across institution type and tie it more closely to the community. The need for those stronger community tie ins has arisen again in the wake of the COVID19 pandemic. [35] The campus leadership must view its work beyond the halls of the campus and into the economic and civil life of the community which it serves.

## Conclusion

Institutions of higher education are facing an existential threat like never before. For many, surviving this threat will require shifts to the business and educational model, and with even greater difficulty, the mindset. It will require a new clarity behind who they serve, what their mission is, and how to best achieve it.

It has been suggested that the Covid-19 global health pandemic represents an Overton window where substantial federal support of what has traditionally been funded by the state (such as higher education) could become possible [36] and other discussions of what a "bailout" of higher education would look like. [32] Alas though, I agree with others, that it this "bailout" is unlikely, and that many institutions are going to fail. [37]

Most industries have a history that showcase a time of sudden change, where external and even existential threats led to rapid innovation with new ideas and new ways of accomplishing the work set before it.

Higher education could be entering such a period, where it needs to evaluate its values more deeply regarding the students, its local communities, and society at large. There will be new opportunities to engage those responsibilities that have never happened at so many of our institutions before.

Higher education does have a history of change, but one that has historically happened on evolutionary time scales and not revolutionary time scales (sometimes it can feel like geologic time scales). Any leader who seeks to move an institution quickly in a different direction in the face of the shifting landscape ahead will need to intimately and swiftly understand the cultures of the institution (there are many, all with pitfalls), its governance (frequently plodding when in a hurry, and at times stagnate otherwise), and its aversion to risk (which they all have it in abundance).

Internally driven change can be handled by internal schedules, but externally driven change is coming, and it is likely to happen quickly. It took 6 years for Blockbuster to go from its peak to bankruptcy. In the spring of 2020, most institutions went from a vague awareness of COVID-19 to shut down in a matter of weeks. Will that forced and sudden shift in the normal cadence of a semester be enough to shake institutions loose from decades of change resistant tradition? For many the answer will be no.

Some of those institutions will likely survive, there will still be some students and families who seek the traditional. At best, these institutions will be smaller in number, and priced beyond the reach of an increasingly large portion of the population. One could well argue this is already playing out, only slowly for the time being. At worst, such institutions risk becoming a nostalgic reminder of 'what once was'. (There is after all, still one Blockbuster left.) Some of those that hold tightly to 'how it has always been' and the traditions of higher education may well harken back to some of the great Universities that have been around since 1100-1200s, perhaps unaware of how much has changed since those days. They may be equally unaware of a phrase that is perhaps as old as Cambridge itself, dating from at least 1225 when Saint Marher first recorded "Time and Tide waits for no man."

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Shadow JQ Robinson was born in rural eastern Kentucky in 1975, growing up two miles from the Virginia border, deep in Appalachia. He began taking classes at the University of Kentucky at 14 (full-time at 16), earning degrees in Physics & Astronomy and in Mathematics and was inducted to Phi Beta Kappa. His PhD in theoretical nuclear physics is from Rutgers University. He held visiting positions at Lexington Community College and Eastern Kentucky University before joining the faculty at the University of Southern Indiana where he received the Outstanding Teaching by New Faculty Award before moving to Millsaps College. In his decade there, he held several positions including Professor and Chair of Physics, Director of the James Observatory (a historically renovated astronomical observatory), Director of the Compass Curriculum (general education program), Faculty Council President, and Director of Dual Degree Pre-Engineering programs. In 2018, Shadow became the Dean of the College of Engineering and Natural Sciences at the University of Tennessee at Martin. At UT Martin, he has led the academic planning for the Latimer Engineering and Science building (expected opening 2022) and has been central to the visioning and ongoing development of the Innovation and Product Realization Facility.

# How Do Institutions Balance Their Position as Public Spaces with Security?

*Rick Scarborough, Institute for Public Service*

This fall I had the opportunity to attend the football game between Virginia Tech University and Duke University in Blacksburg, VA. It was a beautiful game and kickoff was just before dusk. We sat in the upper deck, as we were supporting the visitors from Durham. The advantage that came with our view was amazing. The sun setting behind the mountains was the perfect backdrop to the uniquely designed buildings that Virginia Tech so known for. However, I couldn't help to reflect back to a dark day on this same campus.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 32 students were killed by Seung Hui Cho, a 23 years-old senior at the university who suffered from mental illness. 17 other students were wounded and many others injured while jumping from windows. Virginia Tech would later be fined by the United States Department of Agriculture for failing to issue prompt campus wide warnings when the shootings began (<https://www.history.com/author/history>, 2019).

The incident at Virginia Tech also proved to spark discussion on what could be done in regards to mental illness on college campuses? A great paper revealing how vulnerable colleges are to mental health, both directly and indirectly, is *Balancing Student Privacy, Campus Security, and Public Safety: Issues for Campus Leaders*. (McBain, 2008) While it is a 2008 publication by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, its content and concerns are valid today. Schools are dealing with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance and Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Each organization, while protecting the rights of some, creates potential hazards for the remaining student body and staff. It is my intention to share the study with my college police chief's colleagues and possibly host a round table discussion.

There have been many campus shootings before and since the Virginia Tech massacre, but yet struggles continue on standardized policies to prevent them. This is especially difficult when attempting to maintain esthetics of a peaceful environment for learning. I spoke with University of Tennessee Knoxville's Chief of Police, Troy Lane. I asked Chief Lane, who prior to coming to UTK served in the same capacity at University of Wyoming, if he had a strategy to address safety but not impact the campus environment negatively. We are accredited by the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (ICALEA) is an advantage as well" said Chief Lane. He also added that it was critical to be involved in the design of new buildings and remodeling of existing buildings using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED). Recent efforts have resulted in acquiring new and improved barricades, which serve as physical barriers preventing unwanted vehicles from entering, but allowing pedestrians to pass through. Chief Lane and other campus leaders meet regularly to discuss and plan responses to potential threats. Recently, the group completed a table top exercise to measure response and available resources. Table Top exercises are time consuming, but offer a cost effective manner in which to prepare your team. Finally, Chief Lane offered this advice, "More prevention will require less response."

Building on the CEPTED philosophy, the University of Nebraska uses their campus partners to collaborate on suggestions. The Annual Nigh Time Walk is a simple way to allow these partners to move throughout the campus and identify potential safety concerns. "The basic idea of this initiative is in the name itself- crime prevention through environmental design," said Jim Jackson, assistant vice chancellor for facilities operations and maintenance, obviously emphasizing environmental! The partnership is made up of the police department, landscape services, facilities and faculty that use the plantings and landscapes for teaching (Fedderson,2017).

Another consideration of campus safety is dealing with incoming international students. Many have safety and security concerns. In the Midwest, college campuses must instruct international students on what action to take in the event of a tornado. At the University of Indiana at Bloomington, officers pass out water bottles during international student orientation, in order to make the students more comfortable in approaching the campus police. (Ross, 2018) It goes on to discuss how stressful being a college student is, but especially so for those studying in another country. Therefore, concern of mental well being is important for international students.

Communication is safety and security of our college campus's is paramount and with today's technology, this shouldn't be a concern. However, to encourage students to be more forthcoming, anonymity is important. Therefore, a smartphone platformed system, a system that will allow an individual to provide information without fear of being identified. The investigation following the 2007 mass shooting at Virginia Tech, revealed 18 potential early warning signs demonstrated to fellow students, instructors and staff that went unreported. Today's tip-lines, are directly and indirectly saving countless lives from mass shootings, assaults and suicide (Parent, 2018).

The University of San Francisco (USF) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) each decided to use a holistic approach. Both institutions determined that all angles should be considered. USF combined its physical security force with its security technology teams. USF focuses on three areas;

- Prevention
- Detection
- Forensics

In prevention, controlling access to residence halls proved difficult and depending on keycards was ineffective. USF already had excellent video surveillance, so adding facial recognition was the answer. Security teams can use facial recognition to track an unwanted individual without disrupting or alarming students (Patton, 2020).

VCU is located in an urban environment in the center of Richmond, VA. It brought all stakeholders together including Richmond Police Department, to improve the perception of safety on their campus. Improved video surveillance technology was a focal point. The enhanced cooperation led to an average of 19 out 20 cases being solved, while the safety perception rate topped out at 95.5 percent (Patton, 2020)!

Current issues with political activism sometimes bring protests, mostly peaceful but at times turn violent. Pre-planning with strategic partners is a priority. Agencies should regularly conduct tabletop exercises and drills on these and other major events. They are important in the event very little notice is given. Security personnel will reflect on their previous training and perform accordingly. Failure to train can directly lead to tragic results (Charlottesville, VA 2017) and indirectly being found negligent, facing civil judgements in the millions of dollars! With preplanning and proper management, most protests can be conducted peacefully on college campuses even when faced by counter protesters, for example the Civil War protests in the Fort Sanders area of Knoxville (2017). We must allow individuals to exercise their first amendment rights, but we must always focus on safety, particularly human life.

Deployment of resources is important, as well as how it is perceived. Securing an area during a peaceful protest should be met with appropriate response. Initial security/law enforcement response should be personnel in traditional uniform and formed up to provide the allowable space for the protest and the route to be taken, if it is to be a march (recently, many of these marches were not pre-approved routes). Plain clothed under cover observers should be used to identify aggressive violent individuals, those that are throwing objects or encouraging other to do so. Observers identify these individuals and then uniformed arrest teams remove them, while trying not to disrupt the event and allowing it to continue. If a tactical team is available, they shouldn't be seen until necessary, placed on stand by for a quick response. A tactical or riot equipped unit should only be brought in when all other measures have broken down. The focus should always be safety and/or how to maintain safety.

I was fortunate to attend a training in Manchester England in the summer of 2017. The training was on crowd control and managing peaceful protests. The UK have a great program called HYDRA. It was developed by a local professor following the stampede at a Wembley Soccer game left many dead. HYDRA is a simulator that recreates the stress circumstances that require leaders to make countless decisions through out the event. However, availability in the United States hasn't taken off. While it's very expensive, \$100,000, costs could be shared to offset the costs.

As I worked on this project, I began to realize just how complex this issue is truly is! How do we ensure the safety of students and staff, while maintaining the beautiful aesthetics of our college campuses. So, I began to look for an example of a simple outline that any campus security plan could begin and eventually build on. A blog by Shannon Arnold (2020), 6 ways to Improve Security on College Campuses, give any school of any size the perfect outline. A term I found throughout the research was **flexibility**. Issues on college campuses change quickly, as well as leadership. Therefore, flexibility is critical. Research also makes it clear, technology requires considerable resources only available to major institutions with large endowments. However, all campuses can make consistent improvements in areas of communication and crime prevention through environmental design (CEPTED). Agencies with minimal resources may turn to potential funding partners. The Department of Justice has a variety of agencies with unique missions that often compliment the goals of college campuses. These agencies include, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and many more. My agency, LEIC, has received significant funding (multi-million) for our programming over the last 20 years.

I look forward to personally challenge myself to expand this study. With my current position, Director of the University of Tennessee's Law Enforcement Innovation Center, I feel I can impact this topic in a positive way. I've also become a member of the University's Emergency Management Committee. I'm a strong proponent of standardizing our safety and security policies, at least those that can be. Obviously, there can be major differences between the campuses. It's impossible to eliminate all safety concerns, but with due diligence, we can maintain a quality of life that students and faculty expect. That quality of life includes a carefree open campus with limited concern for their personal safety.

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Rick Scarbrough became the Executive Director for the University of Tennessee's Law Enforcement Innovation Center on August 1, 2018. He joined LEIC from the Clinton Police Department, having served there for 23 years, the last 16 as their Chief of Police. He also served 6 years for the Anderson County Sheriff's Department.

He is a graduate of the 197th session of the FBI National Academy and the College of Policing Senior Leadership Seminar held in Manchester, England. He has held leadership positions on numerous boards including the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. In 2014, he was awarded Police Chief of the Year for the State of Tennessee.

He holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts in Organizational Management from Tusculum College. Rick's wife, Mollie, is a pharmacist and co-owner of Hoskins Drug Store. They have two daughters, Natalie, also a pharmacist and Rachel an occupational therapist.

# Who will Lead? The Issue of Succession Planning in Higher Education

Melissa Tindell, University of Tennessee System Administration

The benchmark to effective succession planning could be found in Crotonville.

If that statement confuses you, then evidently, you've never been to Crotonville. Crotonville is not just a place...it's the "Harvard on the Hudson."

Located about an hour north of New York City, Crotonville was established in 1956 by the General Electric Company in an effort to make itself the "best managed company in the world." At that time, the 12-week training course aimed to reengineer the philosophy around management by inspiring, connecting and developing its leaders of today and tomorrow (Nicholls, 2017). Today, Crotonville stays true to this mission by inviting mid- to high-level managers at GE to its sprawling 59-acre campus for an intensive, immersive, transformational leadership training program. As an insider at GE said, "this is where you go to get promoted."

In its early formation six decades ago, Crotonville was perhaps a trailblazer in addressing the concept of "wicked problems," as it was on the leading edge of developing its current- and next-generation leaders in the form of intentional succession planning.

The notion of "wicked problems" was first developed in 1973 by Horst W.J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, who were both professors at the University of California at Berkley. Wicked problems are out of the ordinary and may require nonconventional thought. Rittel and Webber state that the failure to address wicked problems, or addressing wicked problems by using standard techniques, could exacerbate an already inflamed situation and result in adverse consequences (Camillus, 2008).

At Crotonville, GE tackles its wicked problems of leadership development and succession planning through its "finishing school" for top executives and uses a menu of 150 different leadership development classes which focus on simulated learning and practical, real-time application in the workplace.

Studies regarding succession planning date back to at least the 1940s. Early on, research focused on succession planning of the chief executive officer (CEO) rather than a broader focus on succession planning within the larger organization (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). Today, while there is much research on succession planning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, perhaps the most notable research was performed by Soonhee Kim, who posited that effective succession planning should include employee self-improvement plans, integration of cross-functional/cross-promotional work assignments, executive coaching and mentoring.

The UT System, comprised of multiple campuses, institutes and extension offices throughout the state, could be addressing its own wicked problem in the area of succession planning. I joined the UT System as its communications director in November 2018. Since that time, there have been 14 members of upper management in the UT System that have departed, retired or moved to other positions either inside or outside the organization. Those 14 individuals represent more than 240 years of service. Why the rapid turnover in such a short amount of time, and how do we prepare high-capacity, high-potential employees to lead in these critically important roles in the future?

At UT, there appears to be three primary ways the organization works to grow the next generation of leaders at its respective institutions: performance reviews, leadership training and informal mentorships. Performance reviews allow a supervisor to assess an employee's performance in a very defined way. IT provides an opportunity for employees and supervisors to:

1. Collaboratively reflect on job performance and professional accomplishments from the previous year
2. Set goals for professional development
3. Establish objectives for contributing to the department's mission
4. Recalibrate expectations and goals for the new year

Leadership training can occur on many levels. Online continuing education around leadership can be found in the UT System's online training platform called K@TE. K@TE represents "Knowledge and Training Excellence" and is UT's comprehensive learning management system for training and professional development. Employees can take advantage of events or online training about such management topics as succession supervision, managing conflict, improving employee conduct, managing across generations, and more.

Informal mentoring at UT becomes a bit trickier. While not part of a formal, recognized program, mentorships can happen when a work relationship grows organically into one of sharing insight, knowledge, encouragement and professional/career advice between a mentor and a protégé.

Established leadership programs such as UT's Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) is designed to build bench strength in executive positions within the UT organization.

ELI was founded by President Emeritus Joe DiPietro in 2019 upon his retirement as a way to address succession planning across the UT enterprise. ELI combines class time, required reading, presentation delivery, development of individual development plans and executive coaching to further develop high-capacity future leaders within the UT organization.

"I felt like it was a good opportunity to provide something relatively unique, new and different," said DiPietro regarding his rationale behind the development of the ELI. "I thought if we saw mid-career people within our own university, we should try to make them stronger and make them more viable in succession planning for us. And if they happen to go away, there's always the chance you are going to hire them back at some time or another."

According to the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPAHR), Presidents, provosts and other high-level executives in U.S. colleges and universities tend to have a median tenure of three to five years in their position.

"From a realist perspective, I don't think succession planning in the way that you see it in corporate or in other structures is as succinctly done in higher education simply because of the turnover in senior leadership," said Brian Dickens, chief human resources officer at the UT System.

Considering the amount of high-level executive turnover I observed in a 12-16-month time period at the UT System (14 individuals representing more than 240 years of service), what is the best strategy for filling these critical leadership positions with the most qualified individuals who can be the most valuable to the organization? Does it make more sense to hire externally or promote high-capacity internal candidates who are ready for promotion?

"Sometimes management says we're not going to hire anyone internal, we're always going to go outside," said DiPietro. "I think you need balance."

Randy Boyd, current president of the UT System, brings a unique perspective to succession planning. His background is predominantly as an entrepreneur, business owner and philanthropist. He entered into public service in 2013 to serve as special advisor on education for then-Governor Bill Haslam. Later, he was appointed as Tennessee Commissioner of Economic and Community Development and ran for governor in 2017.

"My experience in the corporate world has been that you have much more focus on succession development, if not necessarily for the CEO but for the people at the second level (vice president or vice chancellor level)," Boyd said. "In higher education, my impression is that the way you move up is to move out. Rather than promoting somebody from within – which is popular in the corporate world – in higher education, it's almost frowned upon."

Therein lies the debate regarding succession planning and replacing top-level executives: Do we build it (use internal candidates) or do we buy it (hire externally)?

Roger Ahlfeld, vice president of human resources for Tedeschi Food Shops in Rockland, Mass., has outlined some specific advantages and disadvantages to hiring internally versus externally. While hiring internally provides a higher likelihood of cultural fit within the organization, Ahlfeld warns that internal talent may not always have the specific skill set required. While they are exceptional at having the necessary organizational knowledge, internal candidates may need more fine tuning before they are ready to take on the executive-level role, which is why interim appointments may be the best course of action before a permanent appointment is made. External candidates, on the other hand, are armed with new thinking, fresh ideas and little to no biases about the organization. A disadvantage of external hires is they come at a higher price. According to a study conducted by the Wharton School, external hires can earn anywhere from 18-20 percent more than existing employees promoted to a similar position.

Boyd is committed to finding the best way to manage talent at UT.

“It doesn’t seem like you hear many other higher education institutions questioning the process, but we will,” said Boyd. “Maybe it isn’t always better to get someone from the outside. Maybe sometimes it’s better to have somebody who has grown up in our organization and that knows our culture and our ways and has that institutional knowledge.”

Boyd is working to help grow the pipeline of internal candidates who could be potentially ready for promotion by using the “9 Box Guide,” a tool he utilized during his time as founder and chairman of Radio Systems Corporation, a company that sells pet-related products in more than 60 countries around the world. The 9 Box Guide is an individual assessment tool that evaluates an employee's current and potential level of contribution to the organization. The ultimate goal is to create an efficient succession plan and develop the department’s talent pipeline.

## 9 Box Guide

### Behaviors

		Exceeds Standard	At Standard	Below Standard
<b>R e s u l t s</b>	Exceeds Standard	<p><b>Results</b> - Exceeded targets for most goals with respect to quality and/or quantity and delivered these results on or ahead of schedule.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> – Consistently demonstrates outstanding behaviors. Can serve as a role model for others.</p>	<p><b>Results</b> - Exceeded targets for most goals with respect to quality and/or quantity and delivered these results on or ahead of schedule.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> - Demonstrates expected behaviors overall. May require development in some areas.</p>	<p><b>Results</b> - Exceeded targets for most goals with respect to quality and/or quantity and delivered these results on or ahead of schedule.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> - Regularly falls short of meeting RSC standards for behaviors. Needs to demonstrate improvement in behaviors.</p>
	At Standard	<p><b>Results</b> - Met targets for most goals with respect to quality and/or quantity and delivered these results on or ahead of schedule.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> – Consistently demonstrates outstanding behaviors. Can serve as a role model for others.</p>	<p><b>Results</b> - Met targets for most goals with respect to quality and quantity and delivered these results on or ahead of schedule.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> - Demonstrates expected behaviors overall. May require development in some areas.</p>	<p><b>Results</b> - Met targets for most goals with respect to quality and quantity and delivered these results on or ahead of schedule.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> - Regularly falls short of meeting RSC standards for behaviors. <b>Performance Improvement Plan is required.</b></p>
	Below Standard	<p><b>Results</b> - Failed to meet targets for multiple goals with respect to quality, quantity and/or timing.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> – Consistently demonstrates outstanding behaviors. Needs to demonstrate improvement in results.</p>	<p><b>Results</b> - Failed to meet targets for multiple goals with respect to quality, quantity and/or timing.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> - Demonstrates expected behaviors overall. May require development in some areas. <b>Performance Improvement Plan is required.</b></p>	<p><b>Results</b> - Failed to meet targets for multiple goals with respect to quality, quantity and/or timing.</p> <p><b>Behaviors</b> - Regularly falls short of meeting RSC standards for behaviors. <b>Performance Improvement Plan is required.</b></p>

Department supervisors simply evaluate, assess and determine who is ripe for growth among their staff.

### Behaviors

		Exceeds Standard	At Standard	Below Standard	
<b>R e s u l t s</b>	Exceeds Standard	Name	Criteria	Name	Criteria
	At Standard	Name	Criteria	Name	Criteria
	Below Standard	Name	Criteria	Name	Criteria

My recommendations moving forward in solving the wicked problem of succession planning at UT would be to develop some wicked solutions, such as:

- Visit Crotonville – assemble the president, chancellors and chief human resource officers to learn best practices from the “Harvard on the Hudson.”
- Review the demographics and turnover in top-level executives at UT, review exit interviews and develop tangible strategies for improvement.
- Offer alumni of the ELI exclusive continuing education classes around leadership development.
- Consider a 12- to 15-month professional apprenticeship program to select ELI alumni to help tackle wicked problems and grow as a leader. For example, an ELI alum could work alongside UT’s chief human resources officer on a special project designed to bolster succession planning at UT. Or, a high-capacity ELI alum could work on creating the next strategic plan and metrics to measure success. At the conclusion of the apprenticeship, recommendations would be presented to the president and perhaps to the UT Board of Trustees. Think of it like a capstone project.
- Determine and document who the high-capacity employees are who might be ready to take on a higher leadership role within the organization. Consider documenting or including more documentation around their succession planning (this may already exist).
- Consider job-swap/job rotation or shadow programs that expose executives to different aspects of the overall organization. For example, a communications executive could swap or shadow with a finance executive to learn more about the budgeting process.
- Implementation of the 9 Box Guide more broadly to include the campuses and institutes that span across the UT System.
- Contemplate the establishment of an ELI physical presence (or a more robust online presence) at each campus to offer boots-on-the-ground training, development and resources to executives at each campus location.

Advocating for succession planning starts at the top, and the UT System is fortunate to have that pledge from its president.

“Developing our people is the number one responsibility of our organization, and thus it is the number one responsibility of the president of the university,” said Boyd. “It’s not something that I delegate and hope for the best. It’s something that I have to be personally involved in, and it’s my commitment to do that.”

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Melissa Tindell is the Director of Communications for the University of Tennessee System. With more than 20 years of experience in the field of communications, public relations and marketing, Melissa is responsible for overall development, execution and management of internal and external communications programs for UT System Administration. Her primary responsibilities include developing communication strategy and coordination of communication for the UT President’s office, as well as human resources, and government relations and advocacy. Additionally, she manages and ensures compliance with all public information, public records and open meetings requirements, as well as oversees administration of the UT President and UT System social media accounts. Melissa teaches during the summer in the Leadership Academy, the flagship principal preparation program offered through UT Knoxville’s Center for Educational Leadership.

She earned her bachelor’s degree in Communications from UT Knoxville and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in strategic communications from UT Martin. Melissa is joyfully married to Chad Tindell, a local attorney in Knoxville, and has one son.

# Retrospective

Robert M. Smith, University of Tennessee System Administration

Congratulations to the 2020 University of Tennessee Executive Leadership Institute class.

When the class started their first session in October 2019 in Memphis, I remarked, intending to be humorous, this would be the class to show 20-20 vision for our future. Little did any of us know that 2020 would be of such global historical significance. With the pandemic of COVID-19 already killing more than a half-million people world-wide and closing in on 150,000 Americans as well as triggering an economic crisis not seen since the Great Depression, higher education was caught in reacting to “unprecedented and urgent” change.<sup>i</sup>

In a matter of weeks, the University transformed from traditional in-person and onsite classrooms and laboratories to entirely online, a change that would have taken months or years if not for the unprecedented and urgent need to change. In addition, almost every operation within our system adapted as a result of a genuine fear of the spread of this invisible and unpredictable virus. We moved quickly to accommodate stay-at-home orders, social distancing requirements, and healthy safety practices that were unprecedented and urgent.

As if COVID-19 was not enough to confront the class, the May 25 murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer ignited instant condemnation and weeks of intense protests about systemic racism and police brutality engaging millions of Americans as well citizens from around the world. Additional protests as well as riots continued as similar cases of police misconduct and outright racism were brought to light. What some had known for ages if not generations were now becoming beacons for justice to a larger audience. When it takes NASCAR<sup>ii</sup> to bring light to the Lost Cause of the Confederacy,<sup>iii</sup> we recognize a gapping void in understanding our own history. Again, our University was pressed to address conditions that had remained generally absent from our agenda. However, this was (we hope) clearly different. Unprecedented and urgent change was needed, and the demands for substantive change were squarely in our face.

Our Class of 2020 consists of remarkable dedicated professionals who have spent our year together preparing to address the challenges that have made 2020 a significant milestone not only for higher education’s transformation but a global transformation. If we believe Nelson Mandela’s statement that, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,” then we have an obligation to improve our University in ways that not only benefit those who enter our doors but improve our society in general.

This collection of original articles provides inspiration for change within the enterprise. We hope our readers will find within the range of topics thoughtful ideas for the necessary transformation of not just our University but higher education overall.



I admire the members of this class. They will be a group I will always remember for their resilience as well as compassion for each other. Their ability to adapt to the challenges over the past five months of our journey is evidence enough of their enterprise leadership skills as well as innovative mindsets. I appreciated their dedication to the program and found their determination and sense of purpose to their role as leaders of our University inspirational. I congratulate them and wish them well as they continue to pursue their leadership expedition.

A final note of appreciation: Directing our classes though the past two years has included an important colleague: Dr. Ron Tredway. Dr. Tredway has been my partner in the development and execution of the Executive Leadership Institute. I sought him out after the first year of the development of the program's concept. Dr. Tredway was responsible for many of the innovative ideas that now comprise the overall program and has served an important role in making sure the administration of the program has gone smoothly. I am more of the big-idea guy who does not fully value how ideas get implemented. That is why Dr. Tredway's collaboration has been so important not only to the conceptualization but the execution of our program. My grateful thanks to Dr. Tredway.



*Robert M. Smith*



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<sup>i</sup> This was written July 4, 2020. I think we will find the word “unprecedented” to be the most overused word for 2020 not without basis.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.nascar.com/news-media/2020/06/10/nascar-statement-on-confederate-flag/>

<sup>iii</sup> See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost\\_Cause\\_of\\_the\\_Confederacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Cause_of_the_Confederacy)

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