

# Innovation in Higher Ed

**INSIDE**  
HIGHER ED

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As our industry faces many new challenges, some of which seem out of our control, forward-thinking colleges and universities are seeing new opportunities to unlock the power of their institution to revolutionize higher education.

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Sincerely,



*Erik*

Erik T. Nilsson  
VP of Corporate Development  
Jenzabar



# Introduction

Higher education has a reputation for being resistant to change and innovation. While no doubt true of some institutions and some individuals in higher education, colleges and universities have a long tradition of experimentation, and are innovating now in many ways. With traditional economic models and student demographics changing, colleges that don't try new things may well be at risk.

The articles in this compilation explore different kinds of innovation (in administration and finance as well as in academics) at different kinds of institutions. Other pieces consider the culture needed to promote and sustain innovation.

*Inside Higher Ed* will continue to cover these topics, and welcomes your reaction to this compilation and your ideas for future coverage.

--The Editors

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# News

A selection of articles by *Inside Higher Ed* reporters

## Are Two Presidents Better Than One?

BY RICK SELTZER MARCH 5, 2018

College of Idaho's unusual move has experts wondering whether two presidents will create dueling centers of power or reinforce each other. College says it vetted the situation thoroughly and is confident.

In October, Doug Brigham called Jim Everett to talk about the College of Idaho's presidential search.

Brigham is the former president of a title and escrow company and the college's former board chair. He had applied for the College of Idaho presidency, but he did not know if Everett, former CEO of the region's YMCA, had also thrown his hat into the ring for the job.

Everett told Brigham he had in fact applied. And Brigham pitched the idea of a co-presidency.

"I said, 'I'll tell you what, I have a crazy idea,'" Brigham recalled. "If you tell me you don't like it and want to continue to go solo, I'm going to step out of the process.' "

As Brigham tells it, Everett replied that he liked the idea but would

need to think about it some more. Ultimately, he agreed, and the College of Idaho, a 960-student private liberal arts college in Western Idaho, announced [Feb. 24](#) that it was hiring both of them.

They will start as co-presidents in April, testing a largely new dynamic at the college presidential level. Although co-presidencies have taken place in business, experts strained to think of a precedent in higher ed-



Newly hired College of Idaho co-presidents Jim Everett (left) and Doug Brigham (right).

ucation.

University systems operate with campus presidents, of course. Similar setups exist at a few private colleges, such as St. John's College [having different](#)

[presidents](#) at its campuses in Annapolis, Md., and Santa Fe, N.M. But two executive types don't always last for very long on a single campus, as evidenced by J. Keith Motley [stepping down from](#) the University of Massachusetts at Boston chancellorship last year just months after Bowdoin College's former president, Barry Mills, [was brought on](#) as deputy chancellor and chief operating officer.

College of Idaho leaders are well aware the structure is highly unusual. It was one of the major drawbacks the college's search committee and Board of Trustees evaluated, according to Laura Turner, who chairs the board. Trustees discussed whether they could carve out different roles like a CEO and a president or some sort of special assistant's role instead of hiring co-presidents.

"The uniqueness of the structure caused a lot of concern," Turner said. "Doug and Jim felt strongly that, in any of those other structures, you'd have the No. 1 and No. 2 guy. They wanted to do it as co-presidents because they felt that diminishing one of their roles wasn't useful."



There of course would be a problem if the co-presidents disagreed about decisions which had implications for both of their areas of responsibility.



mate responsibility for the institution will lie with both presidents. Cross-over is likely to take place, particularly when it comes to fund-raising. What college president wouldn't like to

have a second version of him- or herself to go on donor visits?

The delegation of authority will be key to whether the arrangement can succeed, college leadership and search experts predicted.

"It would be inefficient if the co-presidents had to come to a unified decision about every issue before them," Susan Resneck Pierce, president emerita of the University of Puget Sound and a consultant for colleges and presidents, said via email. "There of course would be a problem if the co-presidents disagreed about decisions which had implications for both of their areas of responsibility."

All parties are optimistic that the two presidents' long-standing relationship will allow them to resolve any major disagreements. But in the event of an unsolvable dispute, the plan is for the presidents to bring the issue before the board for settlement.

Such a process comes with the risk of breaking down the traditional firewall between presidential and board responsibilities.

"Having the board chair adjudicate in such circumstances invites another problem: involving the chair

Trustees were reassured because both Brigham and Everett had served on the college's board -- Brigham until 2017 and Everett about a decade before, Turner said. They've also known each other for decades, crossing paths while holding prominent positions in the region. Brigham served on committees at the Treasure Valley YMCA while Everett was CEO there.

Still, the search committee and trustees wanted to explore the idea in more depth. They formed a subcommittee of the search committee and did a two-month deep dive into how the structure would work.

"The responsibilities and accountability for the organization are clearly defined," Turner said. "There is a matrix of who in the senior cabinet reports to Doug and who reports to Jim."

Generally, Brigham will focus more on finance, academic affairs and student affairs, and the directors in those areas are expected to report to him. Enrollment will be shared. Everett will have athletics and college relations reporting to him and is expected to be heavily involved in fund-raising. At the same time, ulti-

in operations rather than strategy and policy," Pierce said. "Then too the co-presidents will have to guard against a phenomenon that every co-parent will recognize: the end run to the other parent for a more favorable response."

The mere fact of disagreement could undermine confidence in any resolution. A key attribute leaders must bring to the table is confidence in any decisions, said Dennis Barden, senior partner at the search firm Witt/Kieffer.

A co-presidency isn't necessarily without merits, however. Pierce said the concept might work at the College of Idaho because of what appears to be a long friendship between Brigham and Everett. Barden could see advantages to a leader having a co-president, because presidents often struggle to find others who share their experiences and can offer sound advice.

"Presidents don't have many people they can turn to and get candid, direct, thoughtful and often constructive advice," Barden said. "That is a real problem. If this partnership is everything they say it is, that will be a very significant benefit."

Backers and detractors of the co-president idea emerged even be-

fore the College of Idaho announced it was trying the idea. In February, Karen Gross wrote [a piece for the Aspen Institute](#) arguing for some colleges to consider co-presidents to fill what has become a nearly impossible job for one person. But *Inside Higher Ed* blogger Matt Reed responded [with a list of reasons](#) he prefers single presidents.

While many of the drawbacks to co-presidencies are abstract, revolving around the pitfalls of multiple sources of power or potential conflicts, one appears very real: pay. It will likely be more expensive for colleges to pay two presidents instead of one. That would seem to make the model hard to follow for small or struggling colleges.

The College of Idaho's co-presidents have proposed sharing "one presidential compensation package," according to the release announcing their hiring. But college officials declined to provide additional information about what their pay would be or whether the cost of benefits is expected to be higher for two presidents than for one.

Former president Marvin Henberg received \$290,516 in total compensation in the year ending in June 2015, according to the college's

IRS form 990 filed for that year. Its last permanent president, Charlotte Borst, [left in 2017 after just two years](#). Her salary does not appear on the college's tax form for the year ending in June 2016, and more recent forms are not yet available.

Brigham says the co-presidents' priorities once they take over will be enrollment, fund-raising and managing expenses.

[Data](#) provided by the college show an enrollment decline in recent years.

Brigham didn't get too far into any specific strategies, because he wants to start the new co-presidency with a listening tour to hear from faculty and staff. So far, though, the increased bandwidth that comes from hiring two presidents has helped with at least one thing -- Everett was on the road in Georgia Friday and was not available for an interview with *Inside Higher Ed*. But Brigham was.

Time will tell whether the model is successful in other ways.

"Hopefully, like most things, the proof's in the pudding," Brigham said. "We're not taking any victory laps by any means at this point. We haven't started yet, and we have a lot of work to do." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/03/05/college-idaho-hires-co-presidents-breaking-higher-ed-tradition>

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# A School Money Can't Buy

BY RICK SELTZER // JUNE 8, 2017

As deal to keep Wisconsin Business School name intact approaches its halfway mark, donors consider what it means -- and the changing nature of honoring donors.

The price to buy nothing has gone up over the last 10 years, and an exclusive group of donors is very interested in finding out what the next 10 will bring.

In the fall of 2007, the University of Wisconsin Madison announced an unusual naming partnership for its business school. A group of 13 donors made gifts totaling \$85 million. In exchange, the Wisconsin School of Business would not change its name for a period of at least 20 years.

Many universities try to name their business schools for a single major donor -- they don't leave them unnamed by a group. Wisconsin's announcement also stood out because it came at a time of significant business school naming, a few years after the University of Michigan's business school received \$100 million from alumnus Stephen M. Ross in 2004 and subsequently renamed itself the Ross School of Business, and the year before the



*University of Wisconsin School of Business*

University of Chicago received \$300 million from alumnus David Booth and decided to rechristen its school the Booth School of Business.

As a result, the Wisconsin arrangement grabbed attention across higher education, economics and fund-raising circles. Terry Hartle, the American Council on Education senior vice president, [called it](#) the most interesting development in philanthropy he'd seen that year.

The *Freakonomics* blog [posted](#) what was perhaps the pithiest analysis: "\$85 Million Will Buy You Nothing at the University of Wisconsin."

In that post, economist Steven D. Levitt wrote that "it probably would have been a lot cheaper for the boosters just to bribe the Wisconsin Legislature to pass a bill preventing the naming of the business school, although that strategy would not have gotten them many positive

headlines.”

The Wisconsin Naming Partnership has added a few donors since 2007. It's up to 17 partners and has raised \$110 million. But the term of the nonnaming agreement hasn't been extended -- so now \$110 million will still buy you nothing at the University of Wisconsin.

As the partnership is approaching its midway point, Wisconsin administrators and donors are thinking about how it came together, how it has worked and what might lie in its future. Some early chatter is beginning about whether donations could be accepted to push back the partnership's ending date.

The discussion opens a window into the world of higher education fund-raising, valuation for naming rights and a university's identity. It will also be watched with interest by fund-raisers, who even a decade later view the deal as an innovative idea that regrettably hasn't been replicated elsewhere.

### **What's in a Naming Partner?**

Michael Knetter is the president and CEO of the University of Wisconsin Foundation. Previously, he was the dean of the Wisconsin School of Business, and he spearheaded the development of the naming partnership.

In the early 2000s, the University of Wisconsin was one of only a few Big 10 institutions without a named business school, Knetter said. When he started as dean, he began to examine the possibility of naming the school if a major donor could be found.

Internal analyses determined that such a naming agreement should

bring in a donation of about \$50 million, Knetter said. He started to have conversations with deep-pocketed donors, but those conversations take time. And during that time, Knetter started to question the idea of renaming the school.

“I felt a little bit uncomfortable thinking that one person's name would somehow define the school's brand forever,” Knetter said. “These school namings are usually in perpetuity.”



*Michael Knetter*

At the same time, naming prices seemed to be going up rapidly. Rather than risk jumping into the fray at the wrong time, Knetter thought it might make more sense to wait -- or to not name the school. As he talked with different donors, alumni and stakeholders, he became less and less sure renaming the school was the right way to go.

“It doesn't really often work out that the brand that a business school gets through naming has greater value than the parent brand,” Knetter said. “Our parent brand was really extraordinary. And Wisconsin,

I would say, has an ethos of egalitarianism about it that made me uncomfortable and I think made others uncomfortable. How would the business school be viewed on campus if we somehow tried to rebrand ourselves in a way that almost separated us, or distanced us, from the parent brand?”

Knetter came up with an alternative: preserve the name of the school for a finite period of time. Do it through a collective gift.

The idea aligns with three of the most important financial ideas taught in business school, according to Knetter. First, preserving future options can be valuable. Second, brand equity is valuable. Third, teamwork is important.

Knetter set about seeking donations totaling \$50 million for the idea. The first \$20 million to \$30 million happened relatively quickly. Then he hit a long slow period. But after talks with some influential donors, donors bought in for well over \$50 million in total. The partnership was announced at the end of October 2007, about two years after the first donors signed on.

Those involved said the idea seemed to fit the University of Wisconsin and its business school. The university and its business school are large and have many alumni, but they don't necessarily have access to the same number of super-rich donors as do the country's most elite institutions. The minimum donation amount for Wisconsin Naming Partners was \$5 million in unrestricted money, and donors could put designations on money above that level. That allowed more donors to give relatively small amounts of

money for a naming deal, rather than one mega donor giving a larger chunk in the \$50 million range.

"No way I could have done that," said Wade Fetzter III, a retired Goldman Sachs partner who has chaired the University of Wisconsin Foundation Board of Directors and co-chaired a university capital campaign. "And, in a sense, by subdividing or syndicating, that was the tool that allowed Mike to raise this amount of money."

The funding was also notable because it was largely unrestricted.

"Particularly at Wisconsin but probably in most capital campaigns, probably 90 percent of the dollars are designated," Fetzter said. "So, in a sense, this is consistent because it's designated to the business school. But it's still unrestricted."

### 'Hopefully the Money Is Gone'

The School of Business estimates that the naming partnership has funded about 10 percent to 15 percent of its annual budget, which totaled just under \$68 million last year. The partnership has funded an average of 12.5 full-time faculty members annually, plus scholarships for Ph.D. and M.B.A. students. It has allowed the school to invest in programs and grow undergraduate enrollment from 1,362 in the fall of 2007 to 2,540 in the fall of 2016.

One important condition attached to the money is that it should not be treated like an endowment, said

John J. Oros, a naming partner who is the managing director at the private equity firm J. C. Flowers & Co. LLC and a former chair of the University of Wisconsin Foundation. It is intended to be spent in its entirety over 20 years.

"Hopefully all this money is gone, both principal and interest," Oros said. "It maximizes the impact to the school in this 20-year period in which we're taking the name off the market."

The naming partners like to meet about once a year, Oros said. They typically talk about other university projects and fund-raising needs.

“ I felt a little bit uncomfortable thinking that one person's name would somehow define the school's brand forever. These school namings are usually in perpetuity. ”

They also serve as a sounding board for administrators.

"We were asked things like if we want to be on some sort of board of overseers, and we said no, we'd like to meet and golf once a year or have a nice dinner, and we'd like you to update us and share our opinions on some things," Oros said. "The last thing we want to do is have bought control of the business school among 20 fat cats."

In a few cases, donors have joined the group. One of those cases came when Knetter moved from business school dean to lead the university's

foundation. Donors raised \$5 million for him, making him an honorary naming partner.

But the new additions did not extend the time frame for the naming partnership. That option could be on the table in the future. Most say that major decisions about the program are still a few years away, but it's clear the 10-year anniversary has spurred some thoughts about the future.

"I think we said around the end of the 10th year we would let people think about buying more time off the market," Oros said. "In the beginning, we worried a lot about how

we were going to handle the transition from this 20 years to the next. Now, we think it's probably in the last five years when we're going to get organized."

The business school has a new incoming dean,

Anne P. Massey, who could very well be at the helm as some of those decisions are made. Massey starts in August, taking over from François Ortalo-Magné, who is leaving to become dean of the London Business School.

Massey is still learning the intricacies of the naming partnership and reaching out to its different donors. She's focused on mapping out opportunities for the school of business at a time of massive change in higher education and shifting student expectations.

Eventually, though, she knows talk will turn to the future of the naming

partnership. She's not willing to commit to a course of action yet, declining to rule out options from continuing the partnership as is, to reconfiguring it or moving the school to a new, permanent name.

"I think, from discussions, everyone is very happy with the naming gifts," she said. "It may well continue to expand, bring other people on board. At the same time, we're always stepping back and saying, 'Should we be doing something differently?' That's a good conversation."

### Future Values

At the core of discussions about the partnership's future is the ever-changing question of the value of a name. When leaders and donors had such discussions in the past, they talked about how well-known a donor needed to be -- or how much he or she needed to give -- to make renaming the school worthwhile.

They're likely to have those conversations in the future. They're also likely to have discussions about the length of any naming deal.

Colleges and universities have been increasingly moving toward trying to limit the length of naming deals. They've had some success with buildings, but schools still tend to be named in perpetuity.

For the last decade or so, universities have been working harder to leverage their opportunities when naming schools or buildings, said Tim Winkler, CEO of the Winkler Group, a fund-raising consulting group for nonprofit organizations,

schools and institutions of higher education. In many cases, that comes after institutions years ago permanently named buildings after donors -- and then watched, unable to negotiate new deals, as other colleges and universities brought in larger and larger naming donations as market conditions changed.

The Wisconsin School of Business has managed to put itself in position to take advantage of future inflation in naming gifts, Winkler

"I really think it's a creative and wonderful gift.... It would be nice if we could replicate it at other places, but it hasn't happened yet."

said.

"You can't fault the university," he said. "They're trying to raise money and use any legitimate means possible."

Fund-raising professionals often wish the Wisconsin Naming Partnership could be replicated elsewhere. But so far, they have been unable to do so.

"I really think it's a creative and wonderful gift," said Martin Grenzebach, the chairman of Grenzebach Glier and Associates, a philanthropy consulting firm that serves nonprofit and higher education sectors. "It would be nice if we could replicate it at other places, but it hasn't happened yet."

Colleges and universities that are naming buildings and schools today are likely to look at the deals

in 10 years and believe they were a bargain for donors, Grenzebach said.

The naming partnership's donors offered several ideas that might explain why their naming deal hasn't been duplicated. Announcing the decision to forgo a name can be riskier than it sounds, they said. Leaders have to evaluate whether the move will be viewed as a dedication to the school's current identity, which would theoretically boost its

prestige, or whether it will be considered an admission that they were unable to raise a substantial sum of money, which could hurt the school's standing.

Also, there are relatively few business schools left that aren't

named after donors and famous alumni, cutting the number of candidates. Some mentioned the Stanford University Graduate School of Business as one of the few schools that has not been named after an individual. But an associate dean of development there told the *Chicago Tribune* [in 2008](#) that the Stanford brand is sacred. Harvard University has also historically eschewed naming schools after donors, but it changed course with its public health school [last year](#) after a \$350 million gift -- leading to debate about whether its medical school should be next.

The idea of brand and identity was also cited by Wisconsin boosters. The University of Wisconsin and its business school have a special identity, they said. It doesn't mesh

with the idea of being named after one person. Oros, one of the naming partners, pointed to a sense of camaraderie and jokingly suggested it is because plenty of beer is brewed in Wisconsin.

Of course, donors also acknowledged that every institution ascribes to a set of high moral principles and believes itself to be unique. And it should be noted that the Wisconsin School of Business is located in a building, Grainger Hall, that is named after businessman and donor David Grainger.

Oros said the school may have been able to forgo a name in part because it was so particular about finding the right name.

"I think it was our lack of success at finding a naming partner that led us to this as a better way forward," Oros said. "We were so fussy about getting enough money if we ever did it, and doing it with the right name, that we never did it."

Knetter, the university foundation president and former business school dean who crafted the partnership, said he thinks there was

some value to being the first school to announce a nonnaming agreement.

Knetter also believes the deal will be renewed in 10 years. Yet he admits such a move could require unique circumstances.

"Nobody else has done this since then, and that doesn't necessarily mean that nobody's tried," he said. "But it may not be as easy to do the second time. People have to trust and feel like it's the right thing. And that trust was something I'll never forget." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/08/university-wisconsin-naming-partnership-approaches-halfway-point>

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# Thought Leader Interview: Rolin Moe on Innovation

BY DOUG LEDERMAN //DECEMBER 13, 2017

The head of a small university's "academic innovation" office explains why that phrase isn't a contradiction in terms, and how the office helps professors amplify creative approaches to teaching and learning.

The higher education technology landscape is littered with buzzwords, and perhaps none is as omnipresent right now as "innovation." More often than not these days, it is used to describe what higher education lacks, and desperately needs.

But what does it really mean in the higher ed context, philosophically and practically? Can it coexist with long-standing academic traditions of excellence, quality and considered change? Or is the phrase "academic innovation" an oxymoron?

[Rolin Moe](#) is well placed to consider those questions. Moe, assistant professor and director of the Institute for Academic Innovation at Seattle Pacific University, sat down for an interview with "Inside Digital Learning" last month. The conversation is one of a series conducted by *Inside Higher Ed's* Doug Lederman at the Online Learning Consortium's Accelerate conference in Orlando, Fla.



*Rolin Moe (left) and Doug Lederman*

The interviews were sponsored by [OLC](#) and "[Inside Digital Learning](#)," and conducted on the [Shindig](#) video platform.

A partial, edited transcript of the conversation with Moe appears below.

**Q: There are probably some people for whom the idea of "innovation" and "academic" in the same title doesn't really work. I think that's unfair, and higher ed is frequently bashed for not innovating and not adapting,**

**which I think history shows is not quite accurate. Maybe start by laying out, if you can -- and hopefully you can do it in ways that mere mortals like me can understand -- the philosophical view of innovation and how you come at it from a scholarly standpoint. Because it sounds like that informs what you're trying to do practically?**

**A:** So my background is as an educational technologist ... with specific technologies for students with

learning disabilities, day-to-day operations of the campus, learning management. And in doing that and putting in a critical framework that I've had since my undergraduate days and beyond, I'm always looking for those places where we believe we have a conceptual framework but we don't. That we just assume [a] word has a meaning universally, but it actually has quite a few different definitions.

MOOC was the first one for me. I was getting my doctorate right when the MOOC [phenomenon] took off. So I did my dissertation ... about ... the future of the MOOCs. It was really interesting to publish in 2013 and see things such as the pivots to corporate [training] ... The idea that this was omni-benevolent just by fiat was an incorrect one.

And when the MOOCs started to fall away, I noticed that "innovation" was in many ways supplanting that in educational-technology conversations. And so there's a wonderful book by a French Canadian historian Benoît Godin called [Innovation Contested](#). He gives a 2,005-year history of innovation. A word started as a political word for Socrates and Aristotle and Plato, and becomes a pejorative after the English reformation in the 15th and 16th century. Only comes back as a word that we use in everyday society because of French socialism in the 19th century and turns into what we think of today in the 20th century with economists.

So there are all of these interesting definitions you have ... which

makes it a really difficult word to have a conceptual understanding about. So we throw it around in these conversations. But are we all thinking about it in the same way? Are we thinking about it as a product, or a process, or innovativeness, or is it just a positive placeholder for what we want to see happen but aren't sure how to get there?

So thinking about that in my work in technology, I was on a task force at Seattle Pacific University. We have a very strong faculty governance at Seattle Pacific. And thinking about [it] from that perspective, a very out-of-the-box innovation definition, a very Clayton Christensen-like idea ... wouldn't work for us. The idea was, what if we -- understanding our faculty affairs, our strong faculty governance -- grounded this thought about innovation not as something that happened from administration down but something that ... was something that came up through a groundswell of support.

**Q: So you've got this difficult-to-define phrase that is now embedded in this institute. So what work happens there day to day? The goal of the institute is what, given the complexity around the definition of innovation you just described?**

**A:** We're all aware the struggles that higher education finds itself in, especially being a small, private, liberal arts institute type. A number of those boxes of trouble are checked. We're fortunate to be in a strong financial position ... We have an opportunity where we are. So we're in Seattle, which is con-

sidered to be an innovation hub. So you have these places ... Enrico Moretti saw as the next great centers of the world ... San Jose, [Calif.], and Boulder, Colo., and Salt Lake City, and Boston ... When you think about those in terms of population growth, it is oddly the innovation hubs that are seeing a population decrease or stagnation of minority populations. So when we think of innovation as this benevolent term we're using, it's going to solve the world's problems, who is it solving them for?

So that's a big innovation question. What does it look like in academics? I think often when it's a top-down innovation approach, who are we leaving out? Are we leaving out students? Well, we keep saying student first ...

Our faculty are the ones getting left out. And when I talk to alumni relations and I talk to university advancement, when alumni come back, when students come here, they're not interested in understanding the metrics that are being used in Tableau to see if things have the proper return on investment. They're interested in knowing who the faculty are, and when they return, they're interested in seeing how the faculty are doing, who their favorite professors were.

So we think about innovation in that term. We think about it as a very human endeavor. And for us that means rooting it in what we do with faculty. So a lot of what I'm doing is coaching all the various constituencies of the university to



understand: we have to change the way we do things. But that change is not going to happen unless everyone is on board.

**Q: So ... a lot of the conversation ... about faculty is grounded in some ways on this assumption that faculty need to be brought along about innovation or are opposed to technology. So is what you're doing helping them innovate or persuading faculty that they ... need to innovate in ways that matter to them?**

**A:** ... As administrators who work in educational technology, we all have that team of early adaptors that we work with, that are very happy to engage in technology. And I work with them, and we do absolutely wonderful things. But I'm always excited when those faculty who don't come into my office all that often have an idea on something or I run into them in the hallway. We get that conversation of, so, we have an Institute for Academic Innovation now. And almost always that faculty member will say, "Isn't education innovative by nature? Why do we need your office? Why do we need this space if my job is supposed to be innovative? That's what I do. As an instructor, I'm constantly adapting and evolving and thinking about the students. And you might think that method, the way that I give that information, is not moving in the right way. But I'm constantly thinking about the learning environments I'm working in."

So here's the word "innova-

tion" that's being kind of top-down pushed on to you -- what does that mean? When someone hears, "you must innovate," does that mean you should push the class online? You must incorporate learning analytics or quantitative measures? Does that mean you need to be plugging into courseware? So we ask that question, "What are you hearing when you hear 'innovate'? What are you doing when you say, 'I'm innovative already. I just wasn't using that word'?"

So my job is to really be that cohesion, trying to put that together for the faculty member to support not just the new stuff, but what are the great things that have been happening that faculty are doing that just get forgotten, because the job of faculty member is to constantly be evolving, so often they're doing wonderful things that are flying under the radar ...

**Q: What are the possibilities of technology in the learning process that most excite you and most concern you? How do you work for the former and ... question the latter?**

**A:** It's really for me about creating those opportunities when learning can be transformative. My fear with online education, as we often see it, is [that] it's much more derivative, much more didactic. So I ... struggle when we get so focused on meeting objectives that maybe push away the opportunities for learning to happen congruently, tangentially or further exploration. That's frustrating because the promises of on-

line in the 1990s and 2000s was the opportunity for interesting points to take you into new places ...

We have this great history of educational film that starts in the 1890s, and goes into *Encyclopedia Britannica* and Disney and all these different groups. And then in the 1980s, educational film just kind of goes away, and we replaced the film strips with faculty lecturing, which can be more convenient. But is that creating that same opportunity? So where are the places that we can connect people so that community can grow and foster and shine?

And then at the same time, we do have to think about how to scale that. A lot of the successful online learning environments I've seen are capped at 25 or 30 people. How do you create community when you're looking at 50, 100, 200 people? In many cases you're talking thousands. Some of the MOOCs that have seen success of that, it often seems *in spite of* the platform rather than *because of*. And I would rather focus on what are the successes -- they're usually geographic. How do we tap in to that to feed community?

So many MOOCs have seen students transcribe videos into different languages and create study groups and various things. The research on that is what's most exciting to me about online education. What happened there? And what can we do so we can try to perpetuate that? I wish we saw more of that from the developers.

**Q: The larger question we're**

**all wrestling with here: Do you believe that there will be very few institutions that will end up untouched by technology in the instructional process? ... Is it inevitable that technology, of one kind or another, is going to be part of the learning process for pretty much every learner? And is that OK? Is it just about the intelligent use that actually furthers the learning objectives? Because you're obviously not antitechnology, but you are ... a guardian about trying to make sure that it's used thoughtfully and not willy-nilly.**

**A:** My academic career has been involved in technology-enhanced teaching and learning. My doctorate is in learning technology. I'm a huge advocate for it. I find more often than not that I'm the person pumping the brakes on conversations ... The rate of how we're building technology moves very fast, but go into any vendor hall at a conference such as this, and it really is kind of the similar thing. So proctor software, content management services, textbooks -- I don't necessarily see those as innovative. That's what we've been doing now. Now we just moved it online.

Is all ... education going to be touched by technology? I'd argue it already has been. Now, whether that looks like this utopian vision of techno-enhanced learning through computers, I'm not sure. It really

needs to be environmentally based. So there are environments where this is exactly what we need to be doing. And my favorite research is the distance education research that's come out of places like Australia and Canada where, because of geographic ... lack of proximity we had to be thinking about how we could connect people across thousands of miles.

**Q: So much of the conversation ... needs to be [around] what the intended audience is and what modes are [effective in reaching them]. What problem are we trying to solve for? And is there a group of students who ... we particularly fail to reach through our old methods? Is it just too early for us to be in a sophisticated-enough level of conversation ... [beyond] technology is good and bad, you know. Is it going to take time for us to get to the set of questions about good for whom? Or do you think we're getting to those?**

**A:** I hope we're getting there. People are getting the cart in front of the horse. The realization that the traditional person who learns well on online education would have learned well anywhere. So I fear that we're going to continue to build, to serve, that model when our goal as educators is to make education inclusive for anyone who wants it. So I do see more of that conversation happening. So I think the thoughtful approach, the slower approach,

in situating it environmentally as much as we can, is going to be vital of that ... The important thing is we have that conversation and we let it be a conversation for a while and appreciate that and then we inform decision making.

**Q: When I look at the history of higher ed, it is marked by slow change. And I don't think that's a bad thing ... but do you believe that slow change is going to be fast enough in this era for most institutions to survive and thrive? Because I do sense ... that the imperatives to change are probably accelerating ... and yet I'm not sure we want it to speed up [the decision making] too much. How do you wrestle with that?**

**A:** So I'm thinking about these faculty coming to me saying, "well, we're already innovators, why are we doing this?" Change is, you know, part of education. It doesn't maybe technologically happen as fast as we want. So what I see too much of is, change for change's sake or change because we need to be changing. So we start that change process without having things clearly defined.

If we think about our institutions as in constant evolution, whether it's [Engeström's activity theory](#) or iterative design or innovation, and we do that from all aspects of our institutions, then that change process will happen in a greater way. ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/12/13/seattle-pacifics-rolin-moe-discusses-academic-innovation>

# Dropping the D

BY ASHLEY A. SMITH // FEBRUARY 9, 2018

Transfer rates at North Carolina's Stanly Community College increased after the college made the simple grading change of no longer awarding D's.

What's the point of a D grade?

Not much, according to one North Carolina community college.

In 2010, Stanly Community College faculty and advisers realized that the long-held tradition of educators using an A-through-F grading scale didn't help students who were on transfer pathways or who needed to complete sequential courses -- meaning courses that require prerequisites. That was due in part to the grade of D, because while students could pass a course with the grade, they weren't allowed to move on to the next course in a sequence or transfer to an institution that required a C or higher.

So the math and English departments at the college made a simple change: they stopped awarding D's.

"Most of us said a student is successful if he or she has 70 percent or better," said Heather Hill, vice president for academic affairs at Stanly. "We were saying 70 percent or better for student learning outcomes, but still allowing students to pass with a D."



In order to transfer courses to the state's universities, students needed to score a 70 percent or at least a C, but the college still allowed students to pass courses with a D. The problem even applied to students who didn't plan to transfer. If they took a prerequisite course, moving on to the next level required at least a C. Yet students could complete a prerequisite course with a D -- they just couldn't move on to the next level.

"We really noticed it was an issue when we had students that would

get the D in their math class and they had a D on the transcript," said Brigette Myers, the math department program head. "Later they would talk to us as an adviser and they're ready to transfer, but we're telling them to retake the class or they have to retake at the [university]. They didn't understand. 'Why can I graduate and it won't transfer?' students were asking, and the syllabus said they could get a D in the class and now we're saying it's not good enough."

So both departments set the

standard that a score of 70 and higher, on a 100-point scale, or an A-minus through C, is considered passing. Anything lower than 70 points is failing.

The change had an impact on the college's transfer success rate, which the state's universities measure one year after students transfer from a community college. Stanly stopped awarding D's collegewide in 2012. For transfer students who had attended Stanly after the change, the college's transfer success rate increased by 15 percent.

Hill said the college, which enrolls about 3,500 students, can't definitively say that eliminating D's led to the improvement in Stanly's transfer success rate, which prior to the change was about 75 percent, but administration and faculty feel strongly that it had an impact.

"By eliminating the D's we showed them if they set the bar high for themselves, they can achieve that," Myers said. "In order to be successful even at the four-year university and to be competitive, they've got to make those A's, B's and C's. It's not prestigious to graduate with a four-year degree and straight D's."

Because math and English are the two gateway courses where the issue would arise, and also courses that nearly every student at the college must take, it was faculty members within those departments who pushed for eliminating the grades. Gradually the movement spread across the college to include all

general education and university transfer courses.

The only area where the grade change didn't apply was allied health, Hill said, which already has an established grading scale that stipulates that anything below 80 points is considered failing.

"I don't feel like having a D shows that you know the majority of course material when a C is considered to be average enough that you should be able to be successful," Myers said. "That first year, I had students ask about it, but I tried to stress the first day of class the grading scale and I made sure I constantly reminded them all semester they need a 70 to pass and less than 70 is failing. But usually, if the student is concerned about their grade, they will rise to meet the bar wherever you set that bar."

Myers said she had at most two students who questioned eliminating the D grade, but it's become the standard during the past few years.

"Many people think I'm mean if they have a 69.3 or 68.5, but that's an F," she said. "That's what it is. They can take quizzes and rework homework until they get 100. There are so many opportunities for them to go in and get those several points. If you can't support that effort, you don't deserve it."

Myers said it's no different from a student who is a few tenths of a point away from an A grade. If they want it, they'll earn those extra points, she said.

Hill said a relatively small number of students were affected. The college's records from 2010 and 2011 show that less than 10 percent of students earned D's.

"The only group that gave us pause that I was worried about were financial aid students, because a D counted for satisfactory academic progress," Hill said. "But most of the students earning D's were having to repeat courses anyway."

Hill said it's just as much of a financial aid concern when a student receives an F and has to repeat.

In recent months, Stanly has been approached by a number of other colleges in and outside North Carolina about altering their grading scales.

"We had a great idea that we sort of sat on because it made so much sense that we didn't see it as innovative," Hill said. "We presented it in the fall and were surprised by the number of colleges who never thought of it. Since then, people from other states have been asking questions."

Evelyn Waiwaiole, the executive director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin, said that educators have been using the same grading system for so long that no one has questioned it.

"If it doesn't transfer, it doesn't count, so why would you do it," she said. "This reinforces that students want high expectations and will work to meet them." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/09/north-carolina-community-colleges-elimination-ds-leads-transfer-success>

# Collaborating on Completion

BY PAUL FAIN // FEBRUARY 21, 2018

New project from land-grant university association will bring 100 institutions together to work on improving student completion rates and closing achievement gaps.

A group of 100 public universities will work with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities to produce hundreds of thousands of additional degrees while also reducing achievement gaps for underrepresented student groups.

The college completion project, which APLU [announced today](#), is the latest sign of greater urgency among public universities about graduation rates and student success, aided in part by performance-based funding formulas that are on the books in 35 states.

Even a few years ago, some presidents of land-grant universities would struggle to recall the student retention and graduation rates of their institutions, said Peter McPherson, APLU's president.

"They know them now," he said. "It's clear that this is an important issue for universities and the country."

Roughly 61 percent of students nationwide who first enrolled in a four-year public college or university in 2011 earned a bachelor's degree within six years, [according](#) to



the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Another 3.4 percent of these former four-year university students earned a two-year degree during that period of time, while 11 percent were still enrolled in college.

The overall degree completion rate for black students at four-year publics was 50 percent, the center found, and about 56 percent for Hispanic students. In comparison, 71 percent of white students and 76 percent of Asian students earned a degree.

McPherson said the completion effort will be a big step for participating universities and the association, which is creating the new Center for Public University Trans-

formation to manage its part of the project. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is providing funding for the association's initial work for the project.

"It's the right thing to do," said McPherson. "We've got to do better."

The 100 universities will collaborate together in 10 "transformation clusters," APLU said. The association will act as a matchmaker in helping to create the clusters, which will be formed around universities with common priorities. Some might include groups of institutions within states or regions, peer universities across state lines, or universities that are working on common student success strategies,

according to APLU.

The focus for the collaborations will be to expand the use of proven completion strategies. Those might include high-touch advising and student services, co-remediation services, completion grants for students, regional transfer pathways, gateway course redesigns, and other evidence-backed approaches.

"Our focus on scaling known strategies will keep the effort lean and nimble," APLU said, "and minimize the need for costly consultants and research studies."

### A Completion 'Movement'?

The project is still taking shape, according to the group, and decisions about which universities will participate in specific clusters have yet to be made.

In some ways the effort resembles the University Innovation Alliance, a coalition of 11 large public research universities that [formed about four years ago](#) to work together on improving graduation rates, also with a focus lower-income and under-represented students.

The UIA, which includes the University of Texas at Austin, Arizona State University, Georgia State University and Ohio State University, has announced substantial gains in degree attainment. For example, after three years, the group said, its 11 campuses [were producing](#) 25 percent more low-income graduates per year, with 100,000 additional graduates over all projected by 2025.

Bridget Burns, the alliance's exec-

utive director, applauded the APLU project, describing the broader completion push by public universities as a growing movement.

"We've been trying to establish a drumbeat," she said. "This is all exactly what we hoped would happen."

UIA-style collaboration between research universities on academics remains relatively rare in a competitive industry, although Burns points to long-standing models like the Big Ten Academic Alliance. But increasing pressure on universities about completion rates, including by state lawmakers and in equity-minded university rankings like those produced by *The Washington Monthly* and *The New York Times*, seems to be spurring on more collaborative action.

In addition to the new APLU project, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities has [created a coalition](#) of 44 member institutions that are working on a student-success project focused on reimagining the first year of college.

And the Gates-funded [Frontier Set](#) is a group of 30 colleges and universities, state systems and supporting organizations that are trying to improve student access and success.

"Working together is smarter and faster," said Burns.

Robert L. Caret, chancellor of the University System of Maryland and APLU's board chair, said collaboration is critical for student success

and equity goals.

"From my personal vantage point, I have seen how collaboration between a public system and other state institutions produces important successes," Caret said via email, "as we see in Maryland by having seamless '2 + 2' partnerships with our state's community colleges so that students can easily transfer to the University System of Maryland's institutions and complete their four-year degree. There is similar potential for collaborative clusters to work effectively on a regional basis."

One of the easiest ways for a university to improve its graduation rate is to get more selective, which tends to mean fewer students who are low income or from minority groups. Likewise, pushing completion goals typically doesn't improve a university's research clout.

As a result, APLU's new project will need to thread a needle of competing interests, not to mention ever-tightening state budgets.

McPherson was confident that participating universities can improve completion rates and close achievement gaps while still striving to attract more research dollars and top students.

"There's real understanding that if you're going to broaden your numbers of low-income, less-prepared students, you need to put in effort to help them complete," he said, but adding that "I don't think degree completion will replace research, nor should it." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/21/public-universities-band-together-completion-rates-and-achievement-gaps>

# AI + Student Evaluations = the Future?

BY MARK LIEBERMAN // MARCH 7, 2018

Student evaluation apps are cropping up frequently -- but a new one adds an artificial intelligence component that could expand the possibilities of engagement between students and instructors.

Digital alternatives to traditional end-of-semester student evaluations seem more numerous by the day. One new tool hopes to advance that landscape with the help of artificial intelligence.

[Hubert](#), launched last fall and currently in use by more than 600 instructors worldwide, appears to students as a chat bot that asks questions about the quality of the class and the teaching.

The conversational messenger format is designed to make students feel more comfortable sharing honest praise and criticism, and the low amount of required effort allows instructors to collect feedback at several points throughout the semester.

The instructor side is where Hubert most differs from similar products. Hubert organizes and synthesizes feedback into a report viewable on an online dashboard. Strengths and areas of improvement appear in separate columns, collated by an AI analysis of repeatedly invoked phrases and sentiments.

"The instructor gets a fast and comprehensive overview of what the class thinks and can choose to dig down really deep to find the reason," said Viktor Nordmark, chief marketing officer at Hubert. "Questions such as 'What did my students think of the lab sessions?' can now be answered in a few seconds."

The [beta version](#) was released seven months ago, after a six-month development period, according to Nordmark. Instructors and students can use the tool for free; it cost the Swedish start-up with four founders and two other employees \$600,000 to build, and maintenance costs are \$200 per month. The company currently isn't generating revenue but hopes to create paid partnerships with employers and higher education administrative offices.

The name "Hubert" is a play on the word "hub," because the tool is designed to serve as a hub of feedback, Nordmark said.

## What It Can (and Can't) Do

Hubert asks students variations on

four basic questions: What could the instructor do to improve the course? Is there anything the instructor should stop doing? What's working well? How has the class been over all?

It is persistent -- if you respond that nothing about the course should be changed, Hubert follows up with "Surely there must be something that could be improved?"

Instructors send links to Hubert via email or through the learning management system. Nordmark said the company will build integrations with all the major LMSes in the near future. The company doesn't sell email addresses it collects through the Hubert platform, Nordmark said.

As of early this semester, professors have started soliciting feedback through Hubert that will shape their approach to teaching the rest. Initial reviews of the tool's performance have been positive, though some instructors say they've encountered bugs.

John Munro, an associate professor of business at the University of the Virgin Islands, thought the tool would be

## Course Evaluation



*Hubert chats with students informally to get their candid thoughts on the course.*

a good fit for his classes on computer applications like Microsoft Word for business students, as well as a class on business history that he teaches to a combination of in-person and remote students.

The traditional evaluation format had grown increasingly unhelpful to Munro -- he only got feedback after the semester was over, and the feedback he did get was from students worn out by finals and ready to move on.

The one-to-10 grading scale on the existing form also didn't lend itself to useful self-analysis, Munro said.

Once students have submitted their comments to Hubert at any time over a seven-day period, Munro lets Hubert do the tedious work he previously had to do himself.

"To me the benefit of the Hubert system is you don't have administra-

tive staff that have to transcribe and tabulate and go through the forms," Munro said. "The person and time cost is reduced to essentially zero or very close."

So far, Munro has learned that some students prefer not to have material "spoon-fed" to them -- he plans to cut back in future weeks. He's looking forward to seeing whether the next round of feedback reflects recognition for actively addressing student concerns.

### What It Could Do

More specialized uses for Hubert are also in the works. Samuel Adams, instructional technology specialist in the intensive English language program at Temple University, has tested the tool in training courses for teachers of English for speakers of other languages, and he hopes it will eventually work for students in those courses as well.

"I like that it just sort of condenses

a lot of the lengthier sentences and explanations down into some key words," Adams said. He also sometimes looks at individual responses to get a clearer sense of how the tool distills multiple sentences into a holistic report.

Adams said he's struggled to use Hubert on his smartphone, and that the algorithm's report on the comments hasn't always aligned precisely with the actual comments. Still, he sees value in using the tool as developers continue to improve it.

With traditional evaluations, "it could be 500 to 700 points of data depending on how many courses and students we have per term. Having to process that over several weeks is pretty onerous," Adams said. "If this could be something with a high degree of fidelity, I think it's something worth exploring." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/03/07/hubert-ai-helps-instructors-sort-and-process-student-evaluation>



# Employment for Everyone

BY DOUG LEDERMAN // MARCH 12, 2018

Trying to counter public perception that the liberal arts aren't worth it, DePauw promises all graduates will have a job or other preferred outcome within six months.

As colleges go, DePauw University has a pretty good track record of ensuring "gainful employment" for its graduates, roughly 95 percent of whom have a relevant job or a place in graduate school within six months of earning their bachelor's degree.

But that wasn't good enough for the parent of one prospective student recently.

"Johnny really wants to go to your school, but Johnny has to get a job," Mark McCoy, DePauw's president, recounts the parent saying at an admissions event for the Indiana liberal arts institution.

McCoy couldn't contain himself. "Thank goodness you stopped him in the nick of time and threw yourself on the tracks," he responded. "Because nobody with a liberal arts education gets a job."

These are trying times for leaders of liberal arts institutions like DePauw. There have long been questions about whether a liberal arts degree is the best route to a job immediately after graduation, McCoy says. "But now



people seem to be saying, if you get a liberal arts education, you've precluded the possibility of ever getting a job."

There is abundant evidence that a liberal arts education [prepares graduates](#) for successful careers, as well as, of course, a successful life. But with many parents and policy makers increasingly focused on students' *first* jobs, DePauw is making a grand statement to show that it can do that, too.

With its [Gold Commitment](#), which DePauw quietly rolled out during its

current admissions cycle, the university promises every graduate a "successful launch." The university vows that for any student who does not have an "entry-level professional position" or acceptance to graduate school within six months of graduation, DePauw and its employer partners will either give them a full-time entry-level position for at least six months, or the university will give the graduate another semester of education tuition-free. (DePauw isn't the only party

that makes a commitment: students must meet a set of academic, behavioral and other requirements to qualify, and alumni will be expected to step up to help current students.)

In many ways, the goal is not a huge lift for DePauw, given the high rate at which its graduates currently launch successfully. Its typical annual graduating class is roughly 500 students, so the 5 percent each year who don't land a job or get into graduate school amounts to about 25 people.

But by making a highly visible promise -- similar to but distinctive from guarantees that a handful of other institutions have made in the past (see box below) -- the university and McCoy hope to make a statement not about what the institution will begin doing, but what it has been doing all along.

"This is not, 'those liberal arts don't work, we've got to change the liberal arts so they do,'" McCoy says. "We already provide a viable, powerful education that works. We're just adding to the structure, codifying some things, so it works for everyone."

### The Liberal Arts Under Fire

With the rise in student debt levels and the lingering effects of the Great Recession, doubts about the value of a college degree has risen, too -- and the liberal arts have taken a particular pounding.

That has led to lots of discussion (in, among other places, Inside Higher Ed's opinion pages) about whether liberal arts colleges and programs should become more focused on shorter-term vocational outcomes, by changing their offerings, how they op-

## Other Colleges' Guarantees

[Capitol Technology University](#)

[Davenport University](#)

[Thomas College](#)

erate, and the like.

[Udacity and boot camps](#): Promise money back if graduates don't get jobs

McCoy believes the debate about whether the liberal arts does and should prepare students for long-term career success or short-term employability is a flawed one. "Yes, we believe that you should go college not just to make a living, but to make a life," he says. "But that's not to suggest that you're not preparing them to make a living."

Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education, has been listening in on a set of focus groups the higher ed lobbying group has been doing with the public, with a tilt toward supporters of President Trump. His assessment: "The public's summary of the purpose of a higher education is jobs, jobs, jobs. They often have difficulty defining the reasons one might get a higher education beyond employment."

Given the stagnant wages for many Americans in the decade since the recession, it's "pretty understandable"

that Americans might feel that way. That's not to say that higher education can or should let that perception stand, Hartle says.

"I think the higher education community in general has tended to assume that the public understands the widespread and diverse purposes of higher education, and we've erred in doing so. We need to talk about the many ways that going to college transforms people's lives -- developing moral reasoning, civic engagement."

But college leaders shouldn't assume they can just "change the discussion -- few organizations and institutions in our society can do that," Hartle says. "Institutions have to meet the public where they are, particularly liberal arts institutions, and particularly in regions of the country with stable or declining populations."

Like, say, Indiana.

### Responding to a 'Flawed Narrative'

DePauw does not fit the profile of a "struggling" liberal arts college. The 180-year-old Methodist institution enrolls about 2,200 students, admits about two-thirds of its applicants, has an endowment of about \$650 million, and has already raised \$320 million in a capital campaign slotted to bring in \$300 million.

McCoy, a former dean of DePauw's music school, enthusiastically embraces the liberal arts. "I want the world to be more liberally educated, and more people to consider this type of education, here and everywhere," he says.

But doubts about the liberal arts'

value impede that goal -- not so much for students but for parents.

"Parents are legitimately concerned about the first job," he says. "If we take that issue off the ta-

ble for you, because we're so sure it works, we think parents will go, 'Now I can stop worrying about this, I can give them the best education available, which is the liberal arts education.'"

Focusing on students' postgraduation outcomes isn't new for DePauw -- it has long focused on experiential learning and has had a center for entrepreneurship for nearly 40 years. But it will as part of the Gold Commitment become more intentional in what it offers (and demands of) students.

Beginning next fall, every student will have a "commitment adviser" in addition to the academic advisers DePauw undergraduates have always had. These advisers will ensure that students fulfill the various experiences and obligations they must to complete [their end of the bargain](#), including graduating in four years, remaining in good behavioral standing and participating in one of [the university's co-curricular centers](#) (entrepreneurship, civic engagement, ethics, etc.) and its [sophomore institute](#) focused on life after DePauw. (A software system will help track whether students are availing themselves of the opportunities and requirements.)

Other "innovations" are likely to follow in future years, but these will be tweaks to what DePauw has long

“ The public's summary of the purpose of a higher education is jobs, jobs, jobs. They often have difficulty defining the reasons one might get a higher education beyond employment. ”

done as part of its liberal arts education, McCoy says, not radical departures from it. Unlike many small private colleges that have added degree programs in fields such as nursing and business and pharmacy, DePauw has clung tenaciously to its liberal arts roots.

"This is upping our game on ourselves a little bit, and we have to be prepared to continue to innovate," he says. "But mostly this is simply us doubling down on what we do well, and since it does, we're willing to guarantee it."

DePauw expects alumni to help with internships along the way and positions for graduates who might need employment after graduation, in exchange for reaffirming to them that "we're dedicated to making your institution relevant and your degree worthwhile," McCoy says.

### Programs Elsewhere

DePauw may be the most visible institution to promise students will find jobs, but it isn't the first.

Thomas College, in Maine, has had its [Guaranteed Job Program](#) since 1999. If a student is unemployed six months after graduation, the college will make monthly payments on their federally subsidized student loans for up to a year, or they may enroll tui-

tion-free in up to six evening graduate courses at Thomas. Students may also re-enroll at Thomas if they are in a job that isn't in their field of study.

Since 2001, only two students have used the loan payoff benefit, while another five have taken advantage of the educational benefit in the previous decade. Roughly 92 percent of students sign a contract to opt in to the program, which obligates them to follow a [series of steps](#) designed to prepare them for career success.

Corey Pelletier, director of career services at Thomas, says the guarantee has not significantly altered the institution's job placement outcomes (which were already good, in the low 90s), nor has it radically increased enrollment demand.

But it helps the college back up its mission of ensuring that students graduate with the practical skills to succeed, and the requirements of the program have "added to students' experience here, getting them more experience and exposure to the workplace. It only works because it's aligned with our mission."

### More Than a Gimmick?

Many colleges of all types, but perhaps especially small private institutions like DePauw, have embraced strategies designed to differentiate them from other institutions or reinforce what marketers call their "value proposition." Critics have dismissed as gimmicks [the "tuition reset" deci-](#)

## Innovation in Higher Education

sions by numerous colleges to lower their tuition by as much as a third, for instance.

"There's a long history of schools implementing some significant step that boosts their enrollment in the short term, but may not have much impact over the long haul," said Hartle of ACE. "Any time you can use a word like 'guaranteed,' you're going to encourage people to look at you a little

bit more closely."

McCoy acknowledges that DePauw hopes its commitment will sway students (and parents) who are skeptical that the university can get them the first job they want. But DePauw has "no desire to be larger than our traditional size, so we do not feel that other schools should be threatened by this," McCoy said via email in response to a reporter's question about whether its

initiative could hurt some of its liberal arts college peers.

"Every institution has its own truth," he continued. "This is something that we see as a way for us to clearly have 'skin in the game.' Other institutions may increase their value proposition in other ways. I hope they will find their own way to increase the share of students that are getting a great liberal arts education." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/03/12/signaling-confidence-liberal-arts-education-depauw-commits-100-employment-graduates>

# Smashing Faculty Skepticism

BY MARK LIEBERMAN // FEBRUARY 14, 2018

Faculty members need one-on-one consultation, positive reinforcement and examples from early adopters before they'll commit en masse to transforming their classrooms.

NEW ORLEANS -- During a session at the Educause Learning Initiative annual meeting last month, panelists asked a succession of attendees to read out loud a prewritten list of complaints faculty members often raise when asked to pursue innovation:

- I've been a teacher for 10 (or 20 or 30) years, so I shouldn't have to undergo development.
- I have enough qualifications already.
- Students don't like working groups and they don't work well in active learning environments.
- Students need to learn how to take better notes.
- I'm not technologically capable.
- Teaching is an art and should be treated as such -- you're either a natural or you're not.
- If I fail, I won't get tenure.

Some of these concerns are legitimate; others, perhaps, ought to be abandoned. They formed the core of the discussion during this session, which aimed to offer "secret decoding" techniques for circumventing



such skepticism and encouraging meaningful change. The biggest takeaway? Students must come first.

"We're not always great at this, but we try to remember that that's what we're here for," said Matthew Aron, blended curriculum lead in teaching and learning technologies at Northwestern University. "We always try to imagine ourselves in the shoes of our students and encourage faculty to do the same."

Some key takeaways from the session:

**Supporting early adopters is key.** Reinventing the classroom is

difficult for most instructors -- none more so than those who are the first at their institution to embark on such a project.

Those pioneers need external validation for their efforts, and they need to hear that they won't be chastised if their attempts fail.

"Sometimes it's nice to say, 'Good try, that's awesome and let's do it even better next time,'" Aron said.

**Never eliminate one-on-one consultation opportunities.** As technology efforts grow, more instructors need help from a fixed number of on-campus experts, often through

workshops and other group activities. But Aron said it's important to maintain the possibility for consultations with individual faculty members.

"It's the one thing we won't tinker with," Aron said. "Even when we offer all different kinds of workshops, if someone says, 'I need help,' we want them to know we'll sit down with them in our office and give them an empathetic ear."

**Innovators want others to see the fruits of their labor.** Whether through active learning centers that give faculty members space to experiment or a spring showcase event that allows for sharing ideas and praise, panelists said positive reinforcement helped spur other instructors to follow early adopters' example.

Support from administrators helps as well -- according to Cody Connor, manager of course design and development at Purdue University, in-

structors signed on to the institution's course transformation initiative in much greater numbers once the provost's office began publicizing it. Connor said he believes faculty members want to feel like administrators will appreciate their work and potentially reward them for it.

"At the beginning we were struggling to recruit faculty to participate in the program," Connor said. "Now they are knocking down our door."

**Progress moves slowly and requires patience.** At the University of Wisconsin at Madison, a group of strategic learning technology consultants descend on the institution's schools and colleges to cultivate long-term relationships with faculty members and students.

Over time, some of them have transformed traditional classrooms into active learning spaces, simply by demonstrating sustained interest in

the course material and a good-faith willingness to collaborate with subject matter experts.

According to Sarah Miller, an academic technology leader at Madison, the work involves setting a vision, contributing to instructional design and performing an "ethnography" of sorts.

"They are learning the culture, politics, power dynamics, strengths, expertise, sources of pride, tension points and personalities while engaging with the vision and strategy," Miller said.

Madison's learning technology consultants have advanced degrees in a wide range of disciplines including curriculum and instruction, teaching, and educational leadership and policy.

"Because there is no one academic pathway to this work, the team has diverse expertise and perspectives -- a strength they draw upon regularly through collaboration," Miller said. ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/02/14/how-institutions-help-faculty-members-embrace-possibilities>

# Opinion

A selection of articles by *Inside Higher Ed* reporters

## Transformative Learning

BY REBECCA AND DANIEL HAGGERTY // DECEMBER 21, 2017

Such learning is not only possible but also measurable, write Rebecca and Daniel Haggerty, who describe an approach that other institutions might consider adopting.

Social justice is embedded in the mission of the University of Scranton, based on the principles of discernment first articulated by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. The university strives to help each student discover his or her values, beliefs and path in life, and that outreach includes students of all faith traditions, as well as those who identify as agnostic or atheistic.

We are always gratified to learn that our students are being deeply impacted by the learning experiences we offer them. But why are they so affected? Is the key the experience or the required reflection after the experience -- or a combination of the two? Can we measure this kind of education, and can such measurement be applicable to all



*Sanctuary of Ignatius of Loyola in Spain*

types of institutions of higher education?

The answer to all of these questions is a resounding yes. We are studying outcomes of an honors course that includes a summer trip to Europe and a fall follow-up course.

We have found a way to assess the value of reflection and contemplation, and how this leads to a transformational learning experience -- particularly vis-à-vis the mission of our university. And we believe this kind of assessment is transferable.

The basic question is whether educators and institutions are truly committed to undergraduate education designed to help students make positive contributions toward making the world a better place. If the answer is yes, you do not have to be Jesuit or religious to tailor our formula to your institution's distinct mission and identity.

Our long-standing Special Jesuit Liberal Arts Honors Program recently began offering students a mission-driven trip to Spain and Italy that puts them up close and personal with the spiritual journey of St. Ignatius. And we have added a fall course that is academically rigorous and writing intensive but also highly reflective.

We created the course because we realized students wanted more. They kept coming to our offices to talk about the trip; they asked to discuss it over a meal. They wanted to think and talk more about how the trip related to what they were

reading, movies they were seeing, how they shared the experience with their friends and families, how it deepened their understanding of the mission behind the education -- and how it helped them learn about themselves.

Thus, we began the process of assessing one of the university's signature honors programs not only from a hard-data standpoint -- collecting statistical information, such as grade point averages and classes taken -- but through the softer lens of personal reflection.

A survey of alumni of the honors program from every class since 1980 drew a 40 percent response. More than 90 percent of the respondents credited the program with honing their critical-thinking, writing and speaking skills. The survey also told us that alumni believe the key to deeper learning is not only study but also reflection through personal writing and group conversations that lead to greater insight.

### **A Holistic View of Student Transformation**

We recently presented our findings at a conference at Drexel University, and participants were eager to learn more about how they might use our methods to integrate their missions into student learning, and assess outcomes. Here is a brief summary of the process we followed.

Working with our Office of Educational Assessment, we identified our program as a high-impact practice, or HIP, meaning it is rigorous, helps students develop meaningful

relationships and encourages them to engage with others of different backgrounds and beliefs. HIPs also provide rich feedback to students to develop important skills and provide for reflection.

We use direct measures such as exams, essays, papers, projects and portfolios. In this course, we also assigned students to create a PowerPoint presentation on the trip's connection to our mission. Students presented this in class and across the campus and even produced a documentary film.

The key was linking these direct measures with the goal of transformative learning, so we measured student understanding of our mission before and after the trip and course. We found that their understanding had been advanced, and that was exciting, since evidence of transformation typically is indirect.

We also did use indirect measures like student attitudes, perceptions, values and feelings, which also capture transformational outcomes. The documentary and PowerPoint presentations were both direct and indirect measures, since they included interviews with students who were expressing how their perspectives changed as a result of the experience.

In addition, we encouraged students to keep journals, so they could review the trip prior to class, which enriched class discussions. After class, they were encouraged to record new insights.

One student wrote that he finally grasped what social justice was,



and he was moved to discern an appropriate personal response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Another wrote that her understanding and appreciation of the Jesuit mission in education started with the trip and came together in the companion course, and that the university's mission had become her personal mission in life.

We also interviewed each student to help them process and express what they had experienced. In all, we gathered what we believe was a holistic view of not only student learning and achievement but, moreover, of student transformation, as well.

We are conducting comparative analysis, too, through pre- and posttrip surveys, and we've found that students in the first survey were tentative about sharing Jesuit values, while the posttrip surveys show that students have come to embrace those values personally.

We have also found that the trip and course have influenced faculty members, too. In one instance, English literature, philosophy and theology professors linked courses in their disciplines to show students how the subject matter in each could be bridged with common themes.

An academic course that is also

transformative might make some educators and institutions uneasy about considering adopting our approach. Some might think that transformation only belongs in institutions with religious identities or military academies.

We beg to differ. Transformation is a natural expression of an institution's commitment to its mission and identity.

Secular institutions are committed to values like civic engagement, leadership in a global context or a diverse and inclusive culture of learning, innovation and discovery. Why not infuse that commitment into undergraduate learning? ■

## Bio

*Rebecca Haggerty is assistant dean of assessments and programs in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Scranton, and Daniel Haggerty is professor of philosophy and director of the Special Liberal Arts Honors Program.*

<https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/02/14/how-institutions-help-faculty-members-embrace-possibilities>

# Why Learning Innovation Can Seem Invisible

BY JOSHUA KIM // OCTOBER 27, 2016

An unseen renaissance.

We all know that there are incredible things going around learning innovation.

Each of us has amazing stories to tell about professors doing new and interesting things in their teaching. Courses that have been redesigned to maximize active learning. Programs that offer innovative opportunities for flexible, experiential, and immersive learning.

All of us can point to ways that the advances in learning science are filtering into teaching practices. Many of us are involved in programs and initiatives for blended, low-residency, online, competency-based, and open learning. We are working on personalized learning applications, project-based learning, and the introduction of progressive and forward-thinking pedagogical techniques to our courses, programs, and degrees.

The challenge is that all of this learning innovation - and there is a ton of learning innovation going on across higher education - can seem invisible to our larger higher ed community.



We know all about the exciting learning innovations that are going on in higher ed. We know about them because we work on these projects. We work with the faculty - or we are the faculty - who are engaged in disciplined experiments within their courses to make non-incremental improvements in learning. We work on new online, blended, and low-residency programs - programs that depend on constant improvement and iteration to stay current with the research on how people learn.

And we talk to each other about the learning innovations occurring on our

campuses. We go to meetings like EDUCAUSE, ELI, OLC, WCET, SXSWedu, POD, and other conferences. We blog and tweet about our work. We keep up with the literature on learning innovation - and we share what we are learning with our extended networks.

The challenge is that most people in higher ed - most faculty and administrators (and students) - don't read what we read. They don't go to the conferences that we attend. They don't talk to the people that we talk to.

Many of us try to tell the stories of the learning innovations through the channels and platforms that we think

will get the message out. We try to put the information on our departmental / unit websites.

We work with our campus communications professionals to tell the stories. We host talks, and discussions, and workshops to have faculty talk about their own learning innovations. We go to lots of meetings. We have lots of conversations.

None of these strategies seems to be adequate in getting the word out about learning innovation.

Even the best of these approaches to communicating are effective only within an institution - within an individual campus. They do little to enable someone to evaluate the scope, size, and intensity of learning innovation across the higher ed sector to draw any conclusions.

Everywhere I look I see exciting things going on with learning innovation. I see big investments in bringing in non-faculty educators such as instructional designers - professionals critical for the creation and running of initiatives in blended, low-residency, online, and open education. I see amazing excitement and energy amongst the Teaching and Learning Center and the Academic Computing communities. We are in the middle

of a renaissance of learning science, data-driven educational decision making, and the move to active and experiential methods of teaching and learning.

Learning spaces are getting re-designed around models of faculty coaching and collaborative group work. Flipped classes are getting better and more interesting, as we understand how to create more compelling digital learning content and to make better use of precious classroom time. The quality of personalized and adaptive learning platforms is rapidly improving. There is a wonderful movement towards students controlling their own digital identities, and constructing their own learning paths. Mobile learning is taking off, digital curricular materials are ascendant, and the line between residential and online learning continues to blur.

How many instructional designers has your campus hired in the past couple of years?

How many new low-residency or online degrees or new educational programs has your school launched?

How much has the conversation on your campus changed about how people learn, and how we should teach, during the past few years?

It is nearly impossible, however, to accurately measure all this learning innovation. We have a hard time pointing to, counting up, and making sense of the learning innovations that are occurring on each campus.

This difficulty is partly a function of the de-centralized organizational structure of most colleges and universities. The learning innovations are spread throughout our institutions. They are not controlled, managed, funded, or communicated about by a central entity.

Do we know which colleges and universities to point to as leaders in learning innovation?

Most of us would probably say that the college or university that we work for is a leader in learning innovation. We think this because we are involved in that work - we see it up close everyday - and we don't see all the learning innovation work done at other schools.

But we can't all be leaders in learning innovation - can we?

How can we talk about - and then tackle - the invisibility of learning innovation?

How can we get the message about the innovations in learning that are occurring across higher ed out to the larger higher ed world? ■

## Bio

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/technology-and-learning/why-learning-innovation-can-seem-invisible>

# The Politics of Academic Innovation

BY STEVEN MINTZ // MARCH 18, 2018

Strategies for advancing academic transformation.

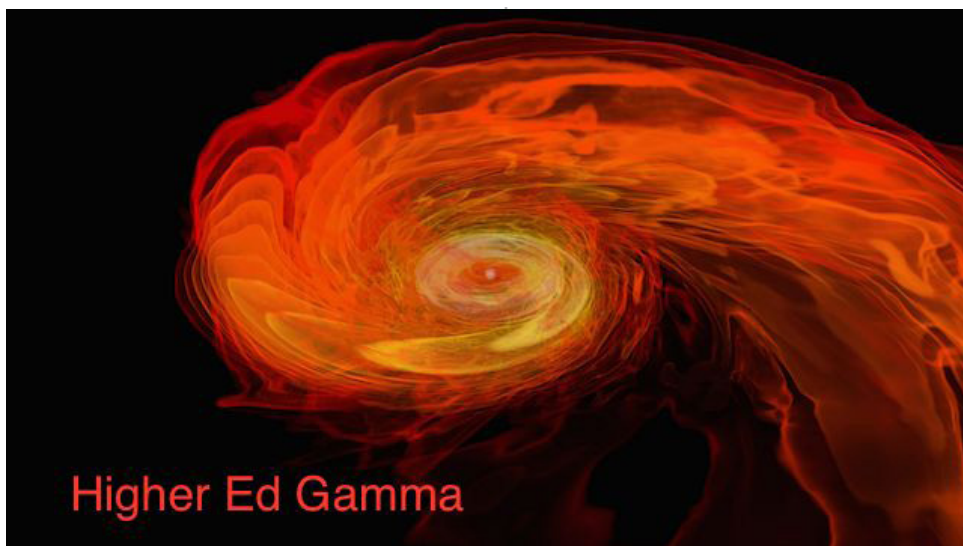
Academic innovation is a political act.

It requires all the abilities of a skilled politician, plus other talents. Success hinges on message crafting, coalition building, vision, and leadership, including the ability to motivate, incentivize, and remove obstacles. But it also depends on a host of practical skills: devising a strategic plan, formulating a sustainable financial model, and, above all, overseeing implementation: streamlining procurement and contracting, managing projects, and ensuring that benchmarks are met and outcomes are realized in a timely manner.

Academic innovation must proceed through a series of well-defined steps.

The first step is to identify a problem, a need, or an opportunity. Without a sense of necessity or possibility, innovation is unlikely to occur. In the absence of a pressing need or promising opportunity, little will happen.

The next step is to identify potential partners. This is a difficult challenge. Here, one must be highly strategic.



Working with individual faculty or on boutique programs is a recipe for planting seeds in the swamp. Individual faculty members too often shift interests or move on; it is far preferable to work with programs, departments, or colleges, but only on projects with a prospect for growth and which meet a clearly assessed need.

It is also essential to assess and continuously monitor the partners' level of commitment – to experimentation, scaling, and sustainability. Our

experience is that no more than one of ten partnership will ultimately work out.

Partnerships, in turn, require intensive care and feeding – and incentives, financial and otherwise. In addition, participants must build a sense of trust, respect, and common interests.

The division of labor must be carefully defined. Our experience is that while faculty members are very willing to ideate, everything else -- implementation, financial modeling, curric-

ular and competency mapping, and instructional resource development -- needs to be a staff responsibility to ensure that outcomes emerge in a timely manner. Given their other responsibilities, one cannot expect faculty to do the heavy lifting.

This partnership must persist, even after a program has been deployed. Revision and continuous improvement are essential elements of the innovation process.

If innovation is to succeed, every university stakeholder has a role. Senior leadership needs to articulate the overarching vision and disseminate institutional priorities, remove roadblocks, and provide impetus and support. Faculty members must ideate, architect, and treat staff as true part-

ners with their own special expertise. Staff, in turn, must drive the design, development, production, and delivery process.

Academic innovation takes place in a dynamic, charged environment with many opportunities for failure. Institutional leadership tends to have vague, shifting, and conflicting priorities. Their timeframes for outcomes tend to be extremely brief and expectations often unrealistic. The reality is that there are no quick fixes, most change is incremental, innovation is a long-term process, and transformation requires shifts in institutional culture, policies, and practices.

Then there are many internal impediments to success. Especially within public institutions, it is extreme-

ly difficult to be nimble, given rules and regulations governing the process of procurement and contracting. Certain tensions are inevitable, especially conflicts of interests and priorities that pit departments against colleges and college against university leadership. Some degree of internal skepticism, resistance, or opposition is likely.

As a political process, academic transformation is extremely difficult and demanding. But the process is well worth the challenges and complications. The conversations that take place reveal that there are alternatives to existing ways of doing business. New pedagogical and curricular possibilities emerge, and connections arise that may well pay off in unexpected ways. ■

## Bio

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<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/politics-academic-innovation>

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