

Innovation and Impact: Shaping Our Value through Trend Analysis

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The future is not yet written, but we should not wish it any other way. The excitement that comes with uncertainty and discovery draws us inexorably into tomorrow.

—James Duderstadt

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, members of the Futures and Markets (FAM) Commission of the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) realized that the commission was uniquely positioned to put a face on the future of continuing higher education by answering tough questions such as these:

- What will continuing education providers look like in 10 or 20 years?
- What will our students look like? Where will they come from?
- How will we measure our success?
- How do we re-engineer our educational structures and develop our employees to meet the challenges of a changing global marketplace?

The commission took on an ambitious research agenda in fall 2010 to identify emerging or future trends that have an impact on continuing professional education; to ask questions regarding the implications of such trends for the association at large; and to develop a range of informed responses to such trends.

The commissioners began a conversation about trends that could catalyze the realignment of continuing education. That conversation identified

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18 areas ranging from lifelong learning for senior adults to postbaccalaureate credentials in global settings. Further discussion led to grouping these areas into three broader categories: community colleges, demographic shifts, and workforce and economic development.

In addition, we explored some of the important issues that must be addressed so that continuous learning can provide for a productive, globally competitive workforce. These included markets for postbaccalaureate education, competition and collaboration among higher education providers, new structures that support educational technologies, knowledge management, quality assurance, accreditation, and university leadership.

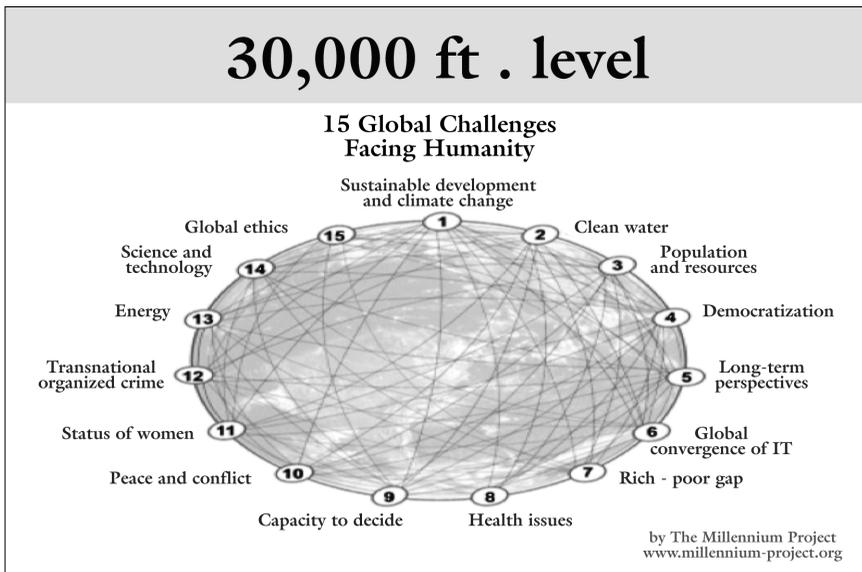
We agreed that the best way to convey the significance of the identified areas and the overarching categories was to develop case studies and conduct an institutional survey relating back to the research agenda.

Finally, we needed to share the studies and survey results with the broader membership and solicit feedback from our regional communities of practice (COP's), Executive Committee, and sister commissions. This article describes the efforts and findings of the Futures and Markets Commission, and provides resources for higher education leaders.

OVERVIEW

The most recent news stories concerning public higher education focus on the need for a systemic paradigm shift. The traditional university has long played a role in the personal and professional development of students. Yet the forces of change—economics, technology, and an expanded global and diverse market—are stretching the conventional paradigms (Chan & Mauborgne, 2005). In a recent survey of presidents of higher education, more than a third believe that the industry they lead is heading in the wrong direction. “We should be worried,” said Nancy L. Zimpler, Chancellor of the State University of New York System. “We are in a flat world. We are going to have to evolve.” (Fischer, 2011). More importantly, our administrators, executive boards, legislators, and community leaders are questioning the value of the traditional public higher education system and considering deregulating it (Garland, 2010). If market forces are allowed to dominate and reshape the higher education enterprise, we could find ourselves facing a new global paradigm according to which some of the most important values and traditions of the university fall by the wayside (Duderstadt & Womack, 2004).

A recent report released by the Millennium Project, "Fifteen Global Challenges Facing Humanity," provides a framework to assess the global and local prospects for humanity. The challenges are interdependent: an improvement in one makes it easier to address others while deterioration in one makes it harder to address others. These challenges are transnational and trans-institutional. They require collaborative action among governments, international organizations, corporations, universities, NGOs, and creative individuals (Figure 1).



Source: The State of the Future Report (2010).

Figure 1: Fifteen global challenges facing humanity

To bring this into focus for US colleges and universities we must consider the following:

- By 2050, the US Census Bureau projects the population to increase by 45 percent over 2008 figures.
- Minorities (foreign-born) are expected to make up one-third of the US population by 2042. Many will need ESL training.
- Nationally, the number of high-school graduates will increase every year until 2009 and then gradually decline. High-school graduates will include higher percentages from families of low socio-economic status.

- Community colleges will become key competitors in regional markets. Fourteen states have authorized community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees.
- On January 1, 2011, 10,000 baby boomers turned 65, of whom 44 percent want ongoing education and half will stay in the workforce.
- The next generation of college students will be living wherever they want to and taking many (if not all) of their courses online.
- Women now comprise nearly 60 percent of postsecondary enrollment.
- Only 26 percent of African-American men between the ages of 18 and 24 are enrolled in higher education, compared with 36 percent of African-American women.

Source: University Continuing Education Association. (2009).

RESEARCH BASE

Against this global and national backdrop, commission members spent considerable time reviewing research about the three trend categories they had identified.

Community colleges

Community colleges are a vital part of the postsecondary-education delivery system. They serve almost half of the undergraduate students in the United States, providing open access to postsecondary education, preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions, providing workforce development and skills training, and offering noncredit programs ranging from English as a second language to skills retraining. Without community colleges, millions of students and adult learners would not be able to access the education they need to be prepared for further education or the workplace. Community colleges often are the nexus for education in a community and a real catalyst for economic development. In the 21st century, community colleges have not only survived, they have thrived by demonstrating remarkable resiliency and becoming centers of educational opportunity open to all seekers. They pride themselves on providing educational marketplaces where student choices and community needs influence course offerings. Now we mark a century in which community colleges have helped millions of people learn and advance toward personal goals, while providing a forum to address challenges facing whole communities (Fischer, 2011).

Demographic shifts

The impact of demographic changes on higher education is unprecedented. Not only have there been changes in the composition of students enrolled in higher education, with an increase in the number of female and foreign born students, over the past decade but there also have been lessons learned from how educators coped with these ebbs and flows. This time, however, there are vastly different scenarios projected for different parts of the country. Approximately one out of every five children age 18 or younger is either an immigrant or a child of immigrants. Since the 1960s, immigrants have come mostly from non-European countries. Many of the additional Hispanic and Asian students who will be in US schools and colleges over the next two decades may be bilingual or may still be learning English-language skills. Many of these students will be first-generation college students as well as first-generation US residents and citizens. In addition, there are unknown numbers of undocumented students—those whose parents may not have appropriate immigration papers but who have been in the American educational system for much, if not all, of their K–12 education.

An even more important consideration relates to college affordability and financial aid policies. Over the past 10 years, tuition and fees have increased significantly at all levels of higher education. At the same time, median household income has not increased at the same rate and is steadily falling. Compounding the situation is the fact that average incomes for Hispanic students, who will comprise a much larger proportion of high school graduates in the future, are considerably lower than for white students. While Pell grants are the cornerstone of aid for low-income students, state grants have increased over the past decade. But an increasing share of state grants is not based on financial need. Because so many of the students in the education pipeline are likely to have significant financial need, one of the most critical implications of the demographic changes is the need to address ways to make college more affordable, to increase funding for financial aid, or to think of other creative approaches that will make it possible for students from all backgrounds to pursue higher education (Garland, 2010).

While there are many steps that individual institutions can take to anticipate and be prepared for the upcoming changes, it may be that intra-institutional and intrastate initiatives will best serve both the education community and high school graduates of the next decade. If higher

education were to approach the upcoming challenges comprehensively rather than individually, more students might be served. Rather than competing for the same highly qualified students, institutions should entertain the notion of some level of cooperation.

Workforce and economic development

Globalization is driving changes in our economy, and the need for an educated workforce has never been greater. The majority of new jobs that will be created by 2014 will require some postsecondary education.

Succinctly stated in a landmark publication on continuing higher education, “the learning paradigm of the past suggests a once-in-a-lifetime vaccine that protects forever and wards off disease (i.e. unemployment). In contrast, however, what we need are daily megavitamins to keep us current in our fields and able to move in and out of roles and jobs. That calls for education in different doses at different times of our lives and the ability to demonstrate and certify continued competence on an ongoing basis” (Kohl & LaPidus, 2000).

As part of its 2010 Job Forecast, Career Builders, an online employment website, surveyed more than 2,700 hiring managers and human resource professionals nationwide across industries. It found that companies are looking to the future and making up for lost ground caused by the recession. The following 10 trends will drive the marketplace over the next decade:

- replacing lower-performing employees;
- using social media to strengthen brand;
- rehiring laid-off workers;
- instituting flexible work arrangements;
- cutting perks and benefits;
- rehiring retirees and postponing retirement;
- using freelancers or contractors;
- adding “green” jobs that reflect environmentally conscious design;
- recruiting bilingual employees; and
- reducing business travel.

Source: Huhman, 2009.

CASE STUDIES

Members of the FAM Commission, who represented a diverse group of regional colleges and public institutions across the US, contributed ten case studies as part of the agenda:

- Integration of Leadership Berks as a Program (Alvernia University)
- Sustainable Continuing Education Model: The Missouri Experience (University of Missouri-Columbia)
- No Margin, No Mission: Proactive Restructuring to Align CE with Priorities of a New President (University of Southern Maine)
- The Re-envisioning of Continuing Education: Creating a Solid Footing for Success (University of Texas-Austin)
- Academic Partnership Program for Emerging Fields (University of Connecticut)
- Program Development—Expanding on the Margin and Blurring the Lines (Eastern Michigan University)
- 2 + 2 Partnerships with Community Colleges (Kansas State University)
- Untapped Pipeline HCC/UH Joint Admissions: A Partnership to Increase Participation and Success (University of Houston)
- Online Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Management (University of Wisconsin- Extension)
- Extreme Marketing Makeover: Adult Degree Program Achieves Enrollment and Revenue Growth Through Transformation of its Course Delivery Formats and Marketing Strategies (Linfield College)

(Case studies can be found at <http://upceafuturesmarkets.blogspot.com/>)

It was envisioned that the members of UPCEA could use these case studies at their institutions as well as utilized in future trend research as best-practice incubators.

Not all of the case study outcomes were positive. In fact, several case studies profiled the risks taken and the failures realized. This is all too often the case but it is rarely ever discussed or presented as a case study. It was agreed that the membership needed to focus on not only what was successful but also what failed and why.

After the case studies were collected and reviewed, members of the FAM Commission worked together to create a Google Docs blogspot site for each commission and community of practice and links for loading case-study results.

While the case-study exercise validated the commission's research agenda, it also provided deeper insights into the daily practices of the continuing education workplace.

INSTITUTIONAL SURVEY

As a follow-up to the case studies, the commission developed an institutional survey with a focus on each of the three overarching categories. Many of the questions that were included in the survey were extracted from member discussion forums and surveys conducted by UPCEA's leadership. FAM commissioners carried out the surveys through 45-minute phone interviews and via email with 17 leaders of continuing professional education. The complete survey results can be found at <http://upceafuturesmarkets.blogspot.com/>.

The following includes survey questions for each area along with sample responses (in italics):

Community colleges

Institution/System (Party Interviewed)

University of Connecticut (Patricia Butler Lofman)

1. Community Colleges—How do we capitalize on the extraordinary growth of community colleges and the national priority placed on them?
NA
2. What is your university's relationship with CCs?
Several transfer with associate's degree to university programs.
3. Do you have a dedicated unit to manage the relationship?
No; each school/college separate; in continuing ed, this falls mostly on regional counselors and faculty; they work with CC dept. heads and faculty.
4. Dual enrollment? Dual admission? 2+2, 3+1?
Continuing ed accepts an associate's degree as 60 credits to the degree completion program; some other schools /colleges allow easy transfer.
5. Articulation/consortial agreements?
Yes informal or older; in process of revising and reconnecting now.
6. Reverse articulation of credit to allow completion of associate's degrees?
Not aware of this.
7. Embed staffing for university advising and student services in CCs?
Not now; hope in the future.

8. Scholarships that you market?
Not now; hope to partner with CC and establish some.
9. Onsite programming?
No.
10. Faculty and resource sharing between university and CCs?
No.
11. Software systems to transfer/evaluate credit?
Yes; university has very sophisticated system that is reviewed frequently.
12. Marketing to CCs/joint marketing partnerships with CCs?
Continuing ed uses general ads in CC newspapers, letters to CC grads; starting now with new degree completion we are marketing via CC dept head and faculty support.
13. Limitations in transferring credit?
Non/few if transferring associate degree; then the issue may be specific courses to meet certain requirements.
14. What role do online courses/programs play?
Little to none.
15. Are CCs exploring offering four-year degrees?
No; however, state has proposal for CCs and state university system to come together under one reporting line; if so, that impact is uncertain.
16. Creative funding models?
None.
17. How would you describe the relationships for CE in your region between secondary (high school) offerings, community colleges, and four-year institutions? Any specific examples where win-win programs have been created among “competitors”?
Slow going; starting a productive relationship with new program.

Demographics

Institution/System (Party Interviewed)

Southern Methodist University (Amy Heitzman)

1. Responding to Changing Demographics (Especially Emerging Majority Minority Populations and Boomers).
NA
2. What are the demographic trends that you are experiencing in your service area?
 - *Shift to slightly younger age in personal enrichment, largest audience 35-50.*

- *Professional development area shift to mid-to-late 30's. Noncredit certificates, graduate test prep skews younger each year.*
3. What are you doing to respond to the changing demos? Give examples of what has worked (ESL, 2&2 programs, older adult programs, diversity outreach initiatives).
 - *Teachers—Post BS + MS-degreed teachers: Develop global education and leadership certificate for teachers in local high schools. Face-to-face now but move to online/hybrid after two years.*
 - *Nonprofit workforce: Nonprofit leadership certificate; create a more robust credential and publicize to local leaders.*
 4. Who owns or is responsible for responding?

Lifelong Learning, Simmons School of Education & Human Development.
 5. Funding sources / models?

Self-funded; revenue is used for development. Cost share with Center for Non-Profit management, grants, seed money, local funders.
 6. What are you doing to attract minorities? Are these integrated into the current offerings or separate?

Nothing in our mission except youth programs (SMU Summer Youth Program). West Dallas Ministries use monies to fund scholarships. Nonprofit leadership certificate reaches out to minority leaders.
 7. What, if anything, is preventing you from reaching out to diverse markets?

SMU brand doesn't include diverse population. Not in our mission. Seed money is biggest issue. University does not have strong relationship with CCs. If CE could move into credit-bearing options, we could be successful.
 8. How do you market to this demo sector? Competitors?

We have a high quality reputation so market will join us in these programs. Gauging demand and research result will give us leverage. Quality of faculty, unique offerings will carry us.
 9. Does your own CE unit have a diversity plan?

We do not have a plan; I belong to the Community Engagement Committee for West Dallas but my unit has nothing related to build diversity in unit; we only look at market demand courses for diverse audiences.

Workforce and economic development

Institution/System (Party Interviewed)

University of Missouri-Columbia (Debbie Robison)

1. Economic and Workforce Development—Increasing Strategic/Political Priority
NA
2. What are the important economic development areas (hot areas, needs)
 - *Job creation.*
 - *Degrees leading to jobs.*
3. What are the critical needs in your community / service region and how are you responding?
 - *Have expanded the size of our law enforcement academy to accommodate more students.*
 - *Established an Extension program that works with communities in an interdisciplinary way to empower them to grow by identifying their unique assets and working together to address deficiencies.*
4. What is your unit doing to promote economic development and attract jobs?
NA
5. How are you aligning with Workforce Investment Boards (WIBS) and community colleges, etc.?
 - *We have met with our Department of Workforce Development at the state level.*
 - *Have attempted to get some of our Extension and CE faculty on the WIBS.*
 - *Our Law Enforcement Academy receives candidates from the WIBS.*
6. Are you being pressured to participate/expand?
NA
7. If you are funded through federal stimulus dollars, what is your plan for sustainability after the funds have expired?
NA
8. What are you doing with corporate training and professional certification?
 - *Continue to provide training to businesses as requested.*

- *Our leadership academy in fire and rescue training is very popular and we are considering expanding it to add other CE units that serve other professionals.*
 - *Our SHRM certification prep course is very popular.*
9. Who owns and staffs economic/workforce development structure?
Very political.
10. What is your institution's response to energy and sustainability trend? Anything unique to your area's needs/capacities?
 - *State-wide conference on energy.*
 - *New interdisciplinary initiative focused on energy.*
11. What role are local and national professional associations, chambers of commerce playing in your efforts?
Have become more involved with town and gown activities particularly our local regional development group.
12. How is your area managing the challenges of aligning and reinforcing the "pipeline" of students from secondary education, post secondary and baccalaureate programs? Do you see the emergence of hybrid programs that require more than associates' programs but less than baccalaureate level? Are you providing programs and offerings in this gap?
 - *We have representatives on various committees.*
 - *Our college of education is working in the urban areas with school boards and teachers.*
 - *No.*
13. What has been your success and/or struggles with Green Jobs (both in developing relevant programs as well as the placement of "graduates" with viable employers)?
Some success in energy efficiency/audit training, which provides additional certification for our graduates in engineering.

FINDINGS

General interpretations from the survey results are noted as follows:

Community colleges

- Fifteen out of 17 institutions have articulation or loosely structured engagement agreements with community colleges.

- Online courses/modules prevail across institutions.
- Noncredit programs are tailored to industry needs with a focus on sustainability/energy, nursing/medical, digital arts/technology.
- Not a great deal of alignment and synergy exists for dedicated management, faculty instructors, and marketing.
- Ten out of 17 institutions have dual/transfer credit options with community colleges.
- Program-pricing models are frozen due to highly competitive for-profits in region such as Phoenix Online, DeVry, and Sylvan Learning Systems and its subsidiaries.

Demographic shifts

- Institutional leaders recognize shifts to foreign-born students and baby boomers. Responsibility for addressing this issue is fairly well spread across campus.
- Everyone is a stakeholder in addressing minority recruitment efforts but roles are not formalized.
- Institutions take advantage of CE credentials and stackable courses to maximize student needs.
- Additional time, money, and staff are needed to address new markets.
- Students are restricted in today's economy by money, time, and distance.
- Full-time high-school enrollments in college are dropping whereas part-time enrollments of students age 24-40 are growing, with a particular focus on lifelong continued professional studies.
- Many students need ESL training and online options to meet employment demands.
- Students are crossing state lines to seek employment and educational programs that will increase their skills.
- Larger percentages of women and minorities are attending courses both online and on campus.
- Marketing materials reflect promotion to multiple and diverse global audiences.

Workforce and economic development

- Institutions identified critical-need fields—biotech, energy, healthcare, nonprofit leadership, human-resource management.

- Providers of customized solutions in professional-development training are growing.
- More interdisciplinary certificates at the executive level are on the rise.
- Many institutions report lower-level relationships with WIBS/ chambers of commerce and very little alignment and access to stimulus/federal grant funds through community colleges. Continuing education units are temporary partners or advisors to community colleges on workforce initiatives.
- Institutions are required to expand enrollments while constrained by restrictions in teaching positions.
- Definition of “green jobs” is not clear and no timeline exists for expected job placement in these emerging fields.

Other

- All 17 institutional representatives agreed that they would support additional case studies as well as serve as resident experts for the organization.

IMPLICATIONS

The case studies, surveys, findings bear witness to the challenges facing institutions of higher education and more especially continuing education as a contributing stakeholder. A new system for higher education is coming into focus. It is elusive and bears very little resemblance to the current brick-and-mortar hierarchies. It comes cloaked in a blurry haze with a distinct perspective and agenda that differs from the traditional tenets of higher education (Kohl & LaPidus, 2000). In a time of dwindling budgets, global market expansion, and burgeoning minority population growth, continuing education providers stand to benefit from this emerging system in that we are well versed and experienced in drawing students from a changing marketplace. We have operated on the fringes not necessarily by choice, but that has allowed us to innovate and integrate technological advances for changing regional and global markets. We have become the laboratory for ubiquitous learning that is no longer limited by time or distance. We are experts at finding the gaps in learning and filling them with timely, relevant, and results-oriented solutions that change lives.

Expanding our research agenda will allow us to be more responsive to

an increasingly competitive borderless market and will provide the template for identifying best practices through comparative analysis across regions. It will also lead to a transformative model of integrative knowledge that can be disseminated to the membership for review, comparison, and inclusion in their own best practices. Further, ongoing research will help us to gauge the pulse of society, learn from our mistakes, share our successes and failures through a network of knowledge partners and ultimately thrive in a changing world. 🌐

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