



## **SUPERVISING ESSENTIALS**

*Non-Academic Supervisory  
Best Practices with Tools,  
Checklists and Templates*

# Supervising @ WAYNE STATE



Division of  
Human Resources



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# Non-Academic Supervisory Essentials

## SUPERVISORY BEST PRACTICES WITH TOOLS, CHECKLISTS AND TEMPLATES

### Introduction

Whether you're a new supervisor, manager, director at Wayne State University or a long-term leader, this guide can help you stay abreast of best practices relative to leading in higher education and WSU as well as prompt new thinking on your own tendencies as a manager and how best to adapt them to build better relationships and positively influence those around you.

### Purpose

This guide was designed to share the role of a supervisor at WSU and provide best practices and actionable items such as tools, checklists and templates that assist with each phase of this process. Refer to your **Human Resource Consultant** for non-academic, non-represented employee support or **Labor Relations** for non-academic, represented employee support. Other resources include:

WSU's **Resource Portal** provides key WSU links and referrals for working with employees from the hiring process through performance management (if applicable) and transitions such as promotions, transfers, demotions, or departures. This portal is grounded in WSU procedures, contracts, and policies. To access it:



1. Open Blackboard at <http://blackboard.wayne.edu> using your access ID and password
2. Refer to "My Organizations Plus" in the top right corner
3. Click on "Resource Portal"

**Accelerate** offers a robust catalog of eResources to support managers, including eCourses, job aids, books and simulations. To access it:



1. Logon to Academics (formerly Pipeline) at [www.wayne.academia.edu](http://www.wayne.academia.edu)
4. Click Employee Resources, Other Resources
5. Click the Accelerate – Employee Development Tools



## Managing Within Higher Education

The challenge of meeting the needs of students and stakeholders has never been stronger in today's higher education climate.

Continuous change has been seemingly the only constant. What's important to keep in mind as a manager in this environment? Below are key trends impacting our industry to generate thought-starters on how they impact each of us as leaders.

### Trends...

- **Competition.** A rapid increase in higher education has occurred ranging from colleges and universities within and beyond the United States as well as private providers and MOOCs (**massive** open online course providers).
- **Funding. Significant decreases in government funding** combined with (relatively) new performance-based funding models contribute toward an increasing focus upon student success including student retention and time-to-graduate as well as cost containment.
- **Research.** Interdisciplinary partnerships are just one example of key areas of focus in terms of research trends. Check out **WSU's Research Spotlight** to see examples of the life-changing research contributions that are happening as a result of our faculty and students!
- **Public Perception.** Shifts are occurring in terms of how the community views higher education that is placing a need for stronger accountability on outcomes and service as well as leading to issues pertaining to access and social fragmentation.
- **Changing Demographics.** The number of high-school students from diverse backgrounds is increasing, declines in population are predicted for states in the North and a great number of employees are anticipated to be impacted by baby boomer retirements. These changes impact the make-up of our student body as well as Faculty & Staff which in turn can shape the need for specialized programs and services.
- **Technology.** Open-source courseware and tools, online learning, virtual communities and newer student success data management systems all impact our student's

## Additional Resources

Partner with your **HR Consultant** to learn about more options for getting acclimated to our higher education climate.

Interested in investing in an eLearning course to build your **[Understanding of Higher Education?](#)**

CUPA-HR's eLearning Course has **[12 modules](#)** on topics ranging from the History & Culture of Higher Education, Structure and Governance and Practitioner Perspectives.

experience on Campus as well as our own delivery models for instruction and service.

- **Community.** With our strong ties to the city of Detroit, it's anticipated that WSU will play a key role in contributing to an even stronger focus on problem solving to urban challenges.

“Good ideas with no ideas on how to implement them are wasted ideas”

*(Michael Fullan, Education Researcher & Former Dean, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and author of several books on Change Leadership)*

### What's Does All This Mean for You?

As a change leader in higher education, it's important to align your strategies with WSU priorities as well as the environmental demands influenced by the context of our changing environment.

In what way do these trends impact the work of your team? How can your team continue to improve in light of what's most important to WSU and our stakeholders?

These are important ongoing questions that will help you to positively impact and shape WSU's future.

### Using the Managing Within Higher Education Resources...

#### Terms Unique to Higher Education

New to “higher ed. speak”? This glossary shares key terms unique to our work environment.

#### Tips for Succeeding in Higher Education

How different is higher education from the industries you have prior experience with? Check out these tips to learn how to navigate the culture of higher education in general

#### Higher Education Professional Associations

Members of your unit may have great recommendations for pertinent practitioner groups relevant to your area of expertise within higher education. This general reference from the Council of Higher Education Management associations may add to your overall list of options for getting involved in our industry.

#### Recommended Reading for Understanding Higher Education

Interested in learning more about what's unique about higher education? Pick a book from one of the many available on the subject or read one of the attached articles.

## Terms Unique To Higher Education

One of the first things many who are new to the higher ed workplace notice are the terms and phrases that are specific to colleges and universities. This “higher ed speak” can be confusing and convoluted to those who have come from the corporate world or are just beginning their careers in higher ed.

Below are common terms as they’re used in the context of higher education:

**Academic Teaching Titles** – The traditional hierarchy of academic teaching titles is, from entry-level to senior:

- Voluntary Faculty
- Part-Time Faculty, Adjunct Faculty
- Instructor, Lecturer
- Tenure-Track Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor

**Accredited:** Official recognition that a [college](#) or [university](#) meets the standards of a regional or national association. Although international students are not required to attend an accredited college or university in the United States, employers, other [schools](#), and governments worldwide often only recognize [degrees](#) from accredited schools.

**Affidavit of Support:** An official document proving adequate funding from an individual or organization to cover an international student's educational and living expenses while [enrolled](#) at a U.S. [college](#) or [university](#).

**Assistantship:** A [financial aid](#) award granted to a [graduate student](#) to help pay for [tuition](#) that is offered in return for certain services, such as serving as a [teaching assistant](#), student assistant, or research assistant.

**Carnegie Classifications** – The universally-accepted, standard framework of categories or identifiers developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to assist those conducting research on higher education in identifying groups of roughly comparable institutions (examples of Carnegie classifications: doctorate-granting, master’s, baccalaureate, associate’s, etc.)

**Curriculum Vitae** – A term that is synonymous with resume. The focus of the vitae is customarily on academic accomplishments such as degrees, teaching, research, publications, papers presented and honors.

**Dean:** The head of a division of a [college](#) or [university](#).

**Institute:** An organization created for a specific purpose, usually for research, that may be located on a [college](#) or [university's campus](#).

**IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System)** – The data collection program within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for all primary providers of postsecondary education in the country. Data are collected and analyzed in the areas of enrollment, program completion, graduation rates, faculty, staff, finances, institutional prices and student financial aid.

**Faculty Senate** – The elected body of representatives from an institution’s faculty who serve in a governance capacity.

**Provost** – The chief academic officer in an institution responsible for all matters pertaining to faculty.

**SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System):** A computerized U.S. government database used to track international students and scholars in the United States.

**Tenure:** A status offered to high-level **faculty** members at a **college** or **university** that allows them to stay permanently in their positions, after demonstrating a strong record of teaching and published research.

**TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language):** A **standardized** exam administered by the nonprofit Educational Testing Service (ETS), which measures English-language proficiency in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Many U.S. **colleges** and **universities** require non-native English speakers to take the TOEFL and submit their scores as part of the admissions process.

**Visa:** An official mark or stamp in a passport that allows someone to enter a country for a particular amount of time. Common visa types for international students and scholars in the United States include the F-1 (student visa) and J-1 (exchange visitor visa). To apply for a U.S. visa, student applicants must first receive a Form I-20 from the **college** or **university** they plan to attend, which is created by the U.S. government's **SEVIS** database.

## Tips For Succeeding In Higher Education

Coming in to higher education human resources from another HR industry can be a culture shock. First, there's the overall culture of higher ed — traditional, conservative, slow to change. Then there are the anomalies of specific types of institutions and their environments, not to mention the many different types of employees (faculty, executives, staff, and administrators) who are recruited, compensated and governed very differently. Understanding that working in higher ed. is not “business as usual” is the first step to succeeding in this unique environment.

Here, several individuals who cut their teeth in the business world of HR before joining a higher ed. institution provide some tips on what to expect when transitioning from private sector HR to higher education.

**Tip #1: Don't expect work to get done at the same pace as in the business world.** “In the corporate world, work is done at a much faster clip than it is in higher ed,” says Karen Westendorp, who prior to joining Normandale Community College a year ago as HR business partner worked for nine years in private sector human resources. “I feel like we take a more thoughtful approach to our work in higher ed., and we take the time to plan and to reflect on what worked and what didn't; but, while we might go slower, that certainly doesn't mean we do less work!”

**Tip #2: Be patient. Change comes slowly in higher ed.** “I've found that higher education holds on tight to tradition and can be very resistant to change,” says Becky Landry, HR manager at Lone Star College-Kingwood, who prior to this role worked for 19 years in HR in the corporate and nonprofit sectors. “The implementation of new federal guidelines, updating/eliminating outdated procedures, and implementing new processes can sometimes be a slow, painful process.”

**Tip #3: There's a committee for that!** “Higher ed. favors the consensus approach to decision making much more so than the business world,” says Westendorp. “I'm still adjusting to the committee approach to problem solving and program planning.” Adds Josh Mackey, director of the Center for HR Innovation, Strategy & Planning at Maricopa County Community College District: “Because of the committee-oriented nature of decision making in higher education, the speed of decision making and implementation of those decisions is usually a much longer process than it is in many other industries.”

**Tip #4: Be ready to share information and collaborate.** “One of the most refreshing differences that I encountered in my move to higher education from the corporate world is the willingness of people to share information with those in the profession across institutions,” says Isaac Dixon, associate vice president and director of human resources at Lewis & Clark College. “This is not a common practice in corporate America, and in my discussions with those that have ‘moved over,’ it is the first thing they comment on.”

Adapted from an article written by Missy Kline, CUPA-HR (College & University Professional Association for Human Resources) blogger

## Higher Education Professional Associations

Shared by the Council of Higher Education Management Associations

**AASHE**

[Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education](#)

**ACCED-I**

[Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors-International](#)

**ACE**

[American Council on Education](#)

**ACPA**

[American College Personnel Association](#)

**ACRL**

[Association of College and Research Libraries](#)

**ACUI**

[Association of College Unions International](#)

**ACUA**

[Association of College and University Auditors](#)

**ACUHO-I**

[Association of College and University Housing Officers-International](#)

**ACUTA**

[The Association for Information Communications Technology Professionals in Higher Education](#)

**AFA**

[Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors](#)

**AHECTA**

[Association of Higher Education Campus Television Administrators](#)

**AIR**

[Association for Institutional Research](#)

**APPA**

[Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers](#)

**ARL**

[Association of Research Libraries](#)

**ASCA**

[Association for Student Conduct Administration](#)



CAS

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education

CAUBO

Canadian Association of University Business Officers

CSHEMA

Campus Safety, Health, and Environmental Management Association

CUPA-HR

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources

EDUCAUSE

Transforming Education through Information Technologies

IACLEA

International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators

NACA

National Association for Campus Activities

NACAS

National Association of College Auxiliary Services

NACCU

National Association of Campus Card Users

NACE

National Association of Colleges and Employers

NACS

National Association of College Stores

NACUA

National Association of College and University Attorneys

NACUBO

National Association of College and University Business Officers

NACUFS

National Association of College and University Food Services

NACUMS

National Association of College & University Mail Services

NADOHE

National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education

NAEP

National Association of Educational Procurement

NASFAA

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

NASPA

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

NCAA

National Collegiate Athletic Association

NCCI

National Consortium for Continuous Improvement

NIRSA

Leaders in Collegiate Recreation

NODA

National Orientation Directors Association

SCOPE

School and College Organization for Prevention Educators

SCUP

Society for College and University Planning

UPCEA

University Professionals and Continuing Education Association

URMIA

University Risk Management and Insurance Association

## Recommended Reading Checklist

### FOR UNDERSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION

- Higher Education Administration: A Guide to Legal, Ethical, and Practical Issues. Norma Goonan. 1999.
- Managing Colleges and Universities: Issues for Leadership. Allan Hoffman. 2000.
- Managing Good Governance. Michael Shattock. 2006.
- Managing Successful Universities. Michael Shattock. 2003.
- Reforms in Higher Education. Keith Watson. 1997.
- Beyond 2020: Envisioning the Future of Universities in America. Mary Landon Darden. 2009.
- The Shifting Frontiers of Academic Decision Making. Peter D. Eckel. 2006.
- Managing the Big Picture in Colleges and Universities: From Tactics to Strategy. Richard L. Alfred. 2005.
- Working Effectively with Faculty. Susan Christy. 2010

### *Other Links of Potential Interest:*

- [Academic Impressions Daily Pulse](#) email for News & Trends in Higher Ed
- [American Council on Education](#)
- [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
- [Inside Higher Ed](#)



## Managing Within Wayne State University

Seeking to gain a deeper insight into the key WSU strategies, systems and operations? Below are several key resources:

### Key Resources...

- [WSUs Office of the President](#) shares a link to the 2012-17 Strategic Plan (currently in process of being updated). Be sure to check out the “In the News” tab. Dr. Wilson and many of our faculty are frequently featured in the media. This is a great way to stay current!
- [WSUs Office of the Provost](#) shares resources for academic services and program leadership.
- **Shared Governance.** Key groups to be aware of: [Board of Governors](#), [Cabinet](#), [Council of Deans](#), [Academic Senate](#), and Union stewards
- [WSU Facts](#). A high level view featuring key statistics. See attached.
- [2013-14 Fact Book](#). This annual compilation shares detailed information about the university’s purpose, resources, activities and people.
- [Student Retention and Graduation Statistics](#). First time in any College (FTIAC) and transfer student statistics are shared by College, Program and demographics. One unique category of students pertains to First Year students – see attached graphic. Understanding their unique perspectives and challenges can help to better appreciate and align services with their needs as they make one of the most important transitions in terms of retention – coming back for their second year.
- [University Peer List](#). Institutional Research & Analysis provides a link to peer institutions including The Great Cities’ University (GCU) coalition (successor to the Urban 13). It may be helpful to reference these organizations when benchmarking.
- [WSU’s Research Spotlight](#) shares exciting examples of innovation happening on Campus.
- [Athletics](#). WSU has had 277 All-Americans in the last 10 years and 11 team national championships!

## Additional Resources

Partner with your **HR Consultant** to learn about more options for getting acclimated to our higher education climate

A short list of what every new WSU manager needs to know:

[WSU Strategic Plan](#)

[WSU Safety](#)

[Virtual Office](#)

[Virtual Tour](#)

[Campus Map](#)

[Org Charts](#)

[University Policies](#)

Collective Bargaining Agreements ([Academic](#) and [Non-Academic](#))

Resource Portal

- **[Budget & Financial Management](#)**. The Business Affairs Officers (BAO) website links and resources as well as a BAO membership directory.
- **[Organization Charts](#)** – including two key support units: **[Human Resources](#)** and **[Computing & Information Technology](#)**. Key systems supported by each attached.

“(Working to) become the pre-eminent public urban research University in the country.”

*President M. Roy Wilson  
University Address, October 2, 2013*

### What’s Does All This Mean for You?

As a new WSU manager, getting up to speed can be daunting. With 32 Schools/Colleges/ Departments and a fairly decentralized organizational structure, it can be complex learning who does what – and how. This list of resources is offered as a starting point for accelerating the learning curve. But, it shouldn’t be used alone. They’re no substitute for building personal relationships and connections in order to help you create a stronger picture of the opportunities and to help us as an institution realize President Wilson’s goal of “becoming... pre-eminent”.

### Using the Managing Within WSU Resources...

#### WSU Facts

New to “WSU speak”? This glossary shares key terms unique to our work environment.

#### WSU Acronyms

How different is higher education from the industries you have prior experience with? Check out these tips to learn how to navigate the culture of higher education in general

#### WSU Systems

Central WSU information systems are described in this document as well as training resources.

#### WSU Budget Links/Resources

Key links are shared for providing information about WSU budget management resources as well as a listing of other relevant Units on Campus for resource management.

#### WSU First Year Student

WSU’s Institutional Research and Analysis shares a pictorial representation of first year WSU students to help us remain grounded in the perspectives/needs of those we serve.

## WSU Facts

Key statistics about who WSU is and what we do. [Click here for the most current list!](#)

- One of the nation's 50 largest public universities, with Michigan's most diverse student body.
- More than 370 degree and certificate programs in 13 schools and colleges.
- Annual research expenditures of nearly \$260 million.
- Nearly 400 student organizations.
- Nearly \$357 million in financial aid was awarded in 2012; lowest undergraduate resident tuition of Michigan's three research universities.
- Affiliations with more than 100 institutions worldwide.
- Among only 3.5 percent of U.S. universities with the Carnegie Foundation classification of RU/VH (Research University, Very High research activity).
- The Department of Chemistry was ranked among the top 100 in the world by the Academic Ranking of World Universities, which studied more than 1,000 universities and published results of the best 500.
- Wayne State is a partner with Michigan State University and the University of Michigan in the University Research Corridor, helping create a vibrant state economy.
- Wayne State's swimming and diving teams have swept the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) Swimming and Diving Championships three years in a row.
- With more than 1,600 students, the School of Medicine is the nation's largest single-campus medical school.
- TechTown, Wayne State's research park and business incubator, serves nearly 120 tenant companies.
- The Hilberry Theatre, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, is the nation's first and longest-running university graduate repertory theatre.
- Sixth-largest Detroit employer.
- Alumni of the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts include a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and recipients of and nominees for the Grammy, Emmy, Tony, Golden Globe, Obie, Screen Actors Guild and Caldecott awards.
- A leader in green technology, the College of Engineering was first in the nation to launch an electric-drive vehicle engineering program and offer an alternative energy technology master's program.
- Home to the only National Institutes of Health branch dedicated to the study of premature birth and infant mortality. Since locating to Detroit in 2002, the Perinatology Research Branch (PRB) has produced life-saving research, cared for more than 20,000 at-risk mothers, contributed more than \$350 million to Michigan's economy, and employed more than 130 physicians, researchers and staff members.
- Awarded a new 10-year contract in 2013 to continue the PRB's groundbreaking research. Studies have concluded that the PRB's economic impact during this period will exceed \$347 million, and new earnings to Michigan residents over the contract's life are expected to total \$143 million.
- Study abroad opportunities in 20 countries on five continents.

## Non-Academic Supervisory Essentials

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- One of only six Michigan universities selected for the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship program, designed to address a significant shortage of math and science teachers.
- Seventy-five Percent of WSU's 240,000 alumni live in Michigan, providing leadership for the state's economic renewal.
- About thirty percent of Michigan's practicing physicians — and more than forty percent of practicing physicians in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties — received all or part of their medical training at Wayne State University.
- Seventy-five percent of Wayne State Law School graduates live and work in Michigan.



## WSU Acronyms

A starting point for capturing frequently used terms on Campus

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### A

AA – Alumni Association

AAB – Academic/Administrative Building

AAUP – American Association of University Professors

APPM – Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual

ASC – Academic Success Center

ATH - Athletics

AV – Audio Visual

AWS – The Anthony Wayne Society

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### B

BAO – Business Affairs Officer

BOG – Board of Governors

BOV – Board of Visitors

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### C

CAID – Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit

CASE – Council for the Advancement and Support of Education

CEU – Continuing Education Units

CFR – Corporate and Foundation Relations

CFSEM – Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan

C & IT – Computer and Information Technology

CHM – Children’s Hospital of Michigan

CLAS – College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

CME – Continuing Medical Education

CoE – College of Engineering

COE – College of Education

COR – Change Order Request

CPC – Constituent Presidents Council (Alumni Association)

CPCS – Center for Peace and Conflict Studies

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## Non-Academic Supervisory Essentials

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CUS – Center for Urban Studies

CY – Calendar Year

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### D

DALNET – Detroit Area Library Network

DAUGL – David Adamany Undergraduate Library

DDI – Developmental Disabilities Institute

DIA – Detroit Institute of Arts

DMC – Detroit Medical Center

DO – Doctor of Osteopathy

DOI – Detroit Orientation Institute

DRH – Detroit Receiving Hospital

DRIS – Detroit Radio Information Service

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### E

EACPHS – Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

EAP – Employee Assistance Program

EAS – Educational Accessibility Services

EOC – Educational Opportunity Center

EPAF – Electronic Personnel Action Form

EPD – Executive & Professional Development

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### F

FAB – Faculty Administration Building

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

FISOPS – Fiscal Operations

FLAC – Free Legal Aid Clinic

FMRE – Fund for Medical Research Education

FOAPAL – Fund, Organization, Account, Program, Activity, Location (accounting string in Banner; a hierarchical coding system for classification, budgeting and recording of financial information and transactions)

FPCA – College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts

FPM – Facilities Planning and Management

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FTIAC – First-Time-In-Any-College, describes a freshman student enrolling in college fresh out of high school.

FY – Fiscal Year (October 1 – September 30)

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**G**

GCR – General Certified Reports

GFA – Grant Fund Authorization

GIRF – General Improvement Request Form

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**H**

HFHS – Henry Ford Health System

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**I**

IOG – Institute of Gerontology

IRB – Internal Requisition Bill

IS – Information Services

ISAAC – Institute for the Study of the African-American Child (EDU)

ITSS – Information Technology Support Services

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**J**

JD – Juris Doctor

JIMD – Journalism Institute for Media Diversity

JV – Journal Voucher

JYM – Junior Year in Munich

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**K**

KCI – Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute

KEI – Kresge Eye Institute

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**L**

LAW – Law School

LIS – Library and Information Science

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**M**

MA – Master of Arts

MD – Doctor of Medicine

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## Non-Academic Supervisory Essentials

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MOA – Memorandum of Agreement

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MPSI – Merrill-Palmer Skillman Institute

MS – Master of Science

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### N

NCOA – National Change of Address service

NEI – New Economy Initiative

NIB – Not In Banner

NIH – National Institutes of Health (note plural is correct)

NIMH – National Institute of Mental Health

NUR – College of Nursing

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### O

OBA – Organization of Black Alumni

ODS – Operation Data Store

OIR – Office of Institutional Research

OMS – Old Main Society

OTL – Office for Teaching and Learning

OVPR – Office of Vice President for Research

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### P

P&A – Professional and Administrative Labor Union

PAR – Position Action Request

PCI – Personal and Confidential Information

PharmD – Doctor of Pharmacy

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

PI – Principal Investigator

PO – Purchase Order

PSC – Personal Services Contract

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### S

SA – Staff Association Labor Union



SBA – School of Business Administration

SCB – Student Center Building

S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely (model for establishing performance goals)

SOM – School of Medicine

SPA – Sponsored Program Administration

SPA – Special Payment Authorization

S/C/D – Schools, Colleges, Divisions

SSW – School of Social Work

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

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## T

TAER – Travel Authorization and Expense Report

TED – Teacher Education

TOMS – The Old Main Society

TRC – Technology Resource Center

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## U

UHC – University Health Center

UP – University Press

URC – University Research Corridor

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## V

VPN – Virtual Private Network

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## W

WaynePM – Performance Management system for identified WSU team members

WDET-FM – Public Radio 101.9

WOW – Women of Wayne

WSU – Wayne State University

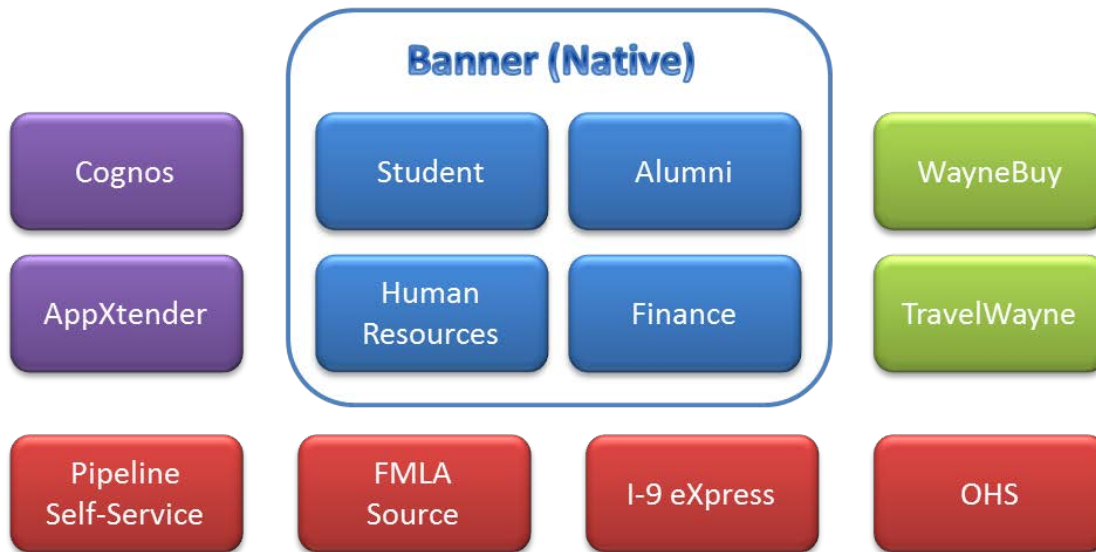
WSUAA – Wayne State University Alumni Association

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## WSU Systems

Central information systems used on campus.

### WSU Systems Applications



### Banner (Native)

Banner is the integrated database system used to Wayne State to coordinate and manage student and employee information and business processes throughout the university. Access to Banner requires the completion and submission of an [Access Request Form](#) to Wayne State Security.

Banner consists of four primarily business modules.

- Financial Management System (FMS)
- Human Resources Management System (HRMS)
- Student Management System (SMS)
- Alumni/Development Management System (AMS)

Data is entered or reviewed in Banner by logging into Banner using Banner forms.

Training is available as an instructor-led session. Register in [T.S.W.](#) (Training. Seminars. Workshops) by logging into Academics, clicking on Employee Resources, then Other Resources.

## Banner (Self -Service)

Banner (Self-Service) is access via Pipeline. This self-service environment provides users with a user-friendly format for enter data into Banner (Native). Currently, there are two, self-service functionalities located in Pipeline:

- **Web Time Entry (WTE)** - Employee time reporting.  
eLearning is available in Accelerate. To access it, log into Academica, click on Employee Resources, then Other Resources. Once in Accelerate, click on “Browse the Catalog”, then “WSU Systems Training”.
- **Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF)** - Processing personnel transactions.  
eLearning is available in Blackboard. Register for access in T.S.W. (Training. Seminars. Workshops) by logging into Academica, clicking on Employee Resources, then Other Resources.

## Cognos

Data reporting application that runs reports from Banner data from operational data stores (ODS). Every night, Banner uploads report data into the ODS. There is an ODS for each of the Banner business modules. Because of the nightly uploads, report data is always 24-hours old.

Job aids are available in **Blackboard**. Register for access in T.S.W. (Training. Seminars. Workshops) by logging into Academica, clicking on Employee Resources, then Other Resources.

## ApplicationXtender

ApplicationXtender is WSU’s Document Management System (DMS). Paper documents are scanned creating electronic files (PDF) and stored in the document management system. Various departments store electronic documents in ApplicationXtender, e.g. Student Financial Aid, Graduate Admissions, and Human Resources. The Human Resource documents stored in ApplicationXtender become the legal copies and the original paper documents are shredded after a 7-day holding period.

Job aids are available in **Blackboard**. Register for access in T.S.W. (Training. Seminars. Workshops) by logging into Academica, clicking on Employee Resources, then Other Resources.

## Online Hiring System (OHS)

All open positions at WSU are posted in the Online Hiring System and all applicants must apply for the open positions through the Online Hiring System.

eLearning is available in **Blackboard**. Register for access in T.S.W. (Training. Seminars. Workshops) by logging into Academica, clicking on Employee Resources, then Other Resources.

### I-9 eXpress

This application is a 3rd-party vendor solution for electronic processing I-9's during the hiring process and verifying employment eligibility using eVerification.

eLearning is available in **Accelerate**. To access it, log into Academica, click on Employee Resources, then Other Resources. Once in Accelerate, click on "Browse the Catalog", then "WSU Systems Training".

### WayneBuy

This application is a 3rd-party vendor interface for managing the purchasing and procurement processes electronically. All data generated during the purchasing cycle is stored in Banner.

Training is available as an instructor-led session. Register in **T.S.W.** (Training. Seminars. Workshops) by logging into Academica, clicking on Employee Resources, then Other Resources.

### TravelWayne

This application is a 3rd-party vendor interface for managing all phases of the travel process electronically. All data generated during the travel cycle is stored in Banner.

Training is available as an instructor-led session. Register in **T.S.W.** (Training. Seminars. Workshops) by logging into Academica, clicking on Employee Resources, then Other Resources.

### Pipeline

WSU Pipeline is a single sign-on portal that provides secure access to many Wayne State systems and services. Pipeline will be replaced by Academica in the fall of 2014. Academica and Pipeline will both be available at first, but Pipeline will be shut down in the 2014-2015 academic year when we are confident that Academica can support all of our campus needs.

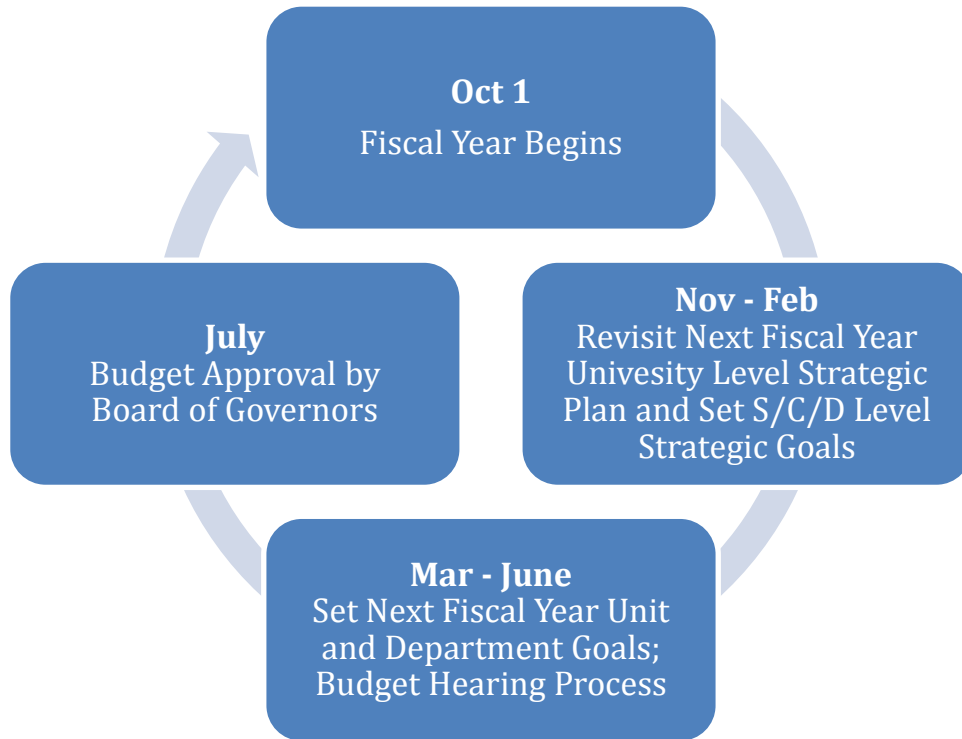
### Academica

Academica is a single sign-on portal that provides secure access to many Wayne State systems and services. Academica will launch across Wayne State in the fall of 2014.



## WSU Budget Links/Resources

### General Budget Cycle Timeline



#### Budget Management:

[WSU Business Affairs Officer Membership Roster](#)

[Budget Policies and Practices](#)

[Systems Access & Security](#)

#### Key Terms:

- [Base Budget Load](#)
- [Journal Voucher \(JV\)](#)
- [Position Action Request Form \(PAR\)](#)
- [Roster Reconciliation](#)

#### Internal Audit

[Best Practices](#)

[Red Flags](#)

#### Key WSU Units/Support

[Disbursements](#)

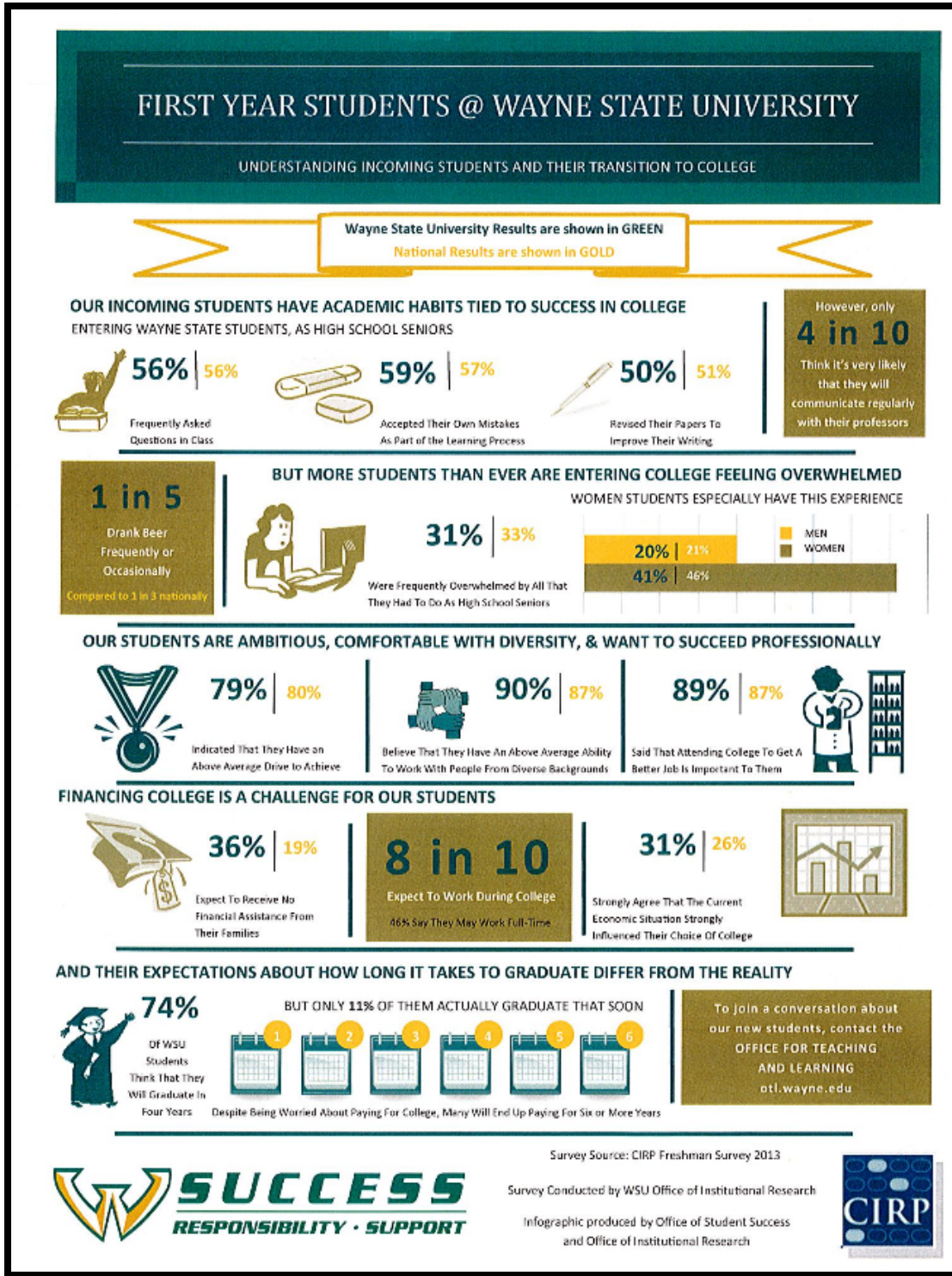
[Payroll](#)

[Procurement & Strategic Sourcing](#)

[Property Management](#)

## WSU First Year Students

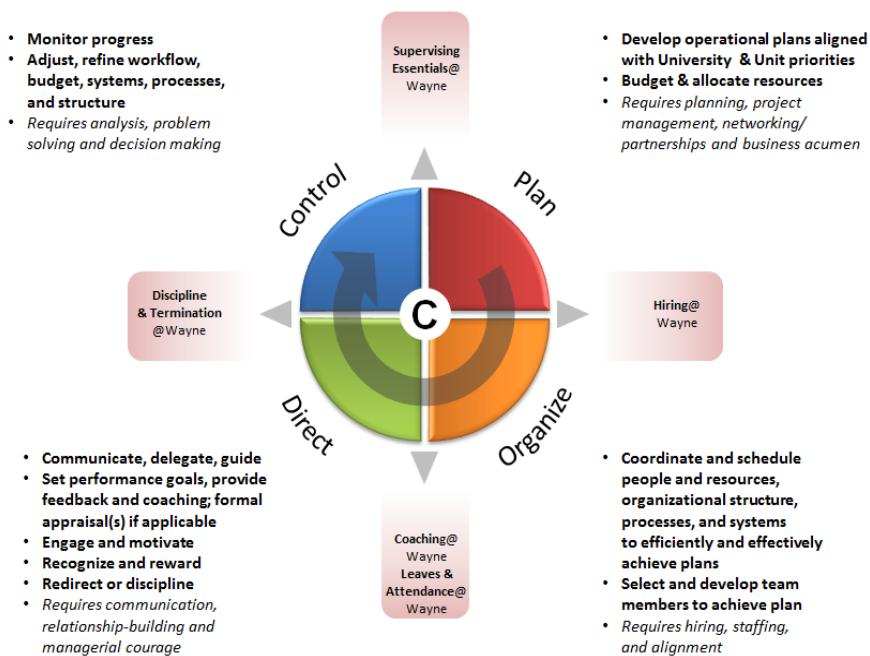
An info-graphic provided by Institutional Research & Analysis to learn more about student perspectives and needs



## Management Functions & Best Practices

WSU Supervisors, Managers and Directors need to be effective at both managing complexity – as well as leading change. This module will highlight the importance of establishing a strong foundation with the managerial basics. Subsequent modules will follow to feature leadership characteristics.

So, what do WSU managers do? Historically, management has been known for being comprised of the following *four key functions*:



Typical responsibilities are shared in bold for each of the four functions. Typical skills and behaviors are shared in italics for each of the four functions. The **Supervising@Wayne** series was been developed to provide a foundation for preparing managers to succeed in these skill areas and as a result, create a strong foundation to set the stage for later leadership concepts.

## New to Management?

Check out these Accelerate Resources:

- First Time Managers: Challenge
- From Technical Professional to Leadership
- Leadership Essentials: Creating Your Own Leadership Development Plan
- Building Trust Incrementally
- The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for Leaders at All Levels
- The New Leader's 100 Day Action Plan: How to Take Charge, Build Your Team and Get Immediate Results

### Best Practices...

- When developing short term **plans**:
  - Take backward steps. Once you know where you want to go, think about what needs to happen to make it a reality.
  - Categorize or group the activities under common themes aligned with the organization's business practices.
  - Create objectives and set milestones to measure progress.
- **Organize and coordinate** people and resources to achieve these plans:
  - Maintain a keen awareness about business needs and team member strengths in order to determine how best to align them. This requires taking the initiative to really get to know individuals and their current capabilities as well as their developmental goals. Assigning responsibilities based upon a balance between these will help the individual grow and stay engaged and challenged – while also ensuring that you meet the business expectations for your unit.
  - Develop a workforce plan with your HR Consultant. Together, consider how many positions may be needed, preferred responsibilities/background, what organizational structure would fit best, and whether there is a need to partner with Total Compensation & Wellness (TCW) to explore job description refinements and market analysis. This information can help to calibrate role and investment expectations – setting the stage for a strong recruitment and employment experience. Also, consider when it might make sense to look at alternative staffing arrangements such as contract or temporary employees.
- **Direct** performance aligned with these plans:
  - Use the SMART goal approach when setting performance expectations. The more specific, measurable, attainable, realistic/relevant and time-bound your expectations – the easier it will be to measure progress and share feedback. Refer to the Coaching@Wayne course for more support.
  - Ensure you share the “latest and greatest” with team members to keep them informed of business, Unit and University happenings. There may be implications for the individual's work that you don't anticipate and having this insight can help them to be more proactive in seizing opportunities or redirect energies. If you're an introvert and find yourself less inclined to seek out informal communication channels – determine a systemic approach to schedule these interactions. It may be an Outlook calendar notice for a regularly scheduled formal team meeting or it may be an informal touch-base “communication prompt” scheduled to help you remember to email individuals, call them or casually connect at a convenient time in the day or over lunch. Regular feedback and communication is directly related to how engaged team members feel. Research shows that individuals need this connection at least once a week with their boss.
- **Control** systems and activities, monitor progress routinely and adjust plans and resources as needed:

24% of employees,  
on average, say they  
do not see their  
manager enough.

*Peter Lynch, 2010*

- Establish systems to routinely assess the degree to which activities are proceeding in the intended manner. An efficient system of control helps to predict deviations before they occur and looks at indicators such as cost, schedule, risk, quality, productivity, etc. by:
  - Establishing a standard of performance
  - Measuring actual performance
  - Comparing desired and actual performance to identify if gaps exist
  - Explore root causes for gaps
  - Implement corrective action
  - Involving team members who are performing the work in the process of evaluation can be motivating. Seek out ways to engage others in a continuous improvement model that works for your Unit.

84% of managers do not know how to accurately measure their team members' progress.

*Peter Lynch, 2010*

75% of leaders have no employee engagement plan or strategy even though 90% agree that engagement impacts organizational success.

*ACCOR, 2011*

#### What's in it For Me?

Strengthening your core managerial practices will help you to establish the technical and operational credibility needed to ensure the essential tasks of your department are accomplished effectively and efficiently. This provides a platform to influence and drive employee performance and engagement.

Why's engagement so important? Employees who are actively advocating and initiating new ways to get work done are more committed, more likely to stay with the organization, more likely to provide great service and more likely to recommend WSU to others.

#### Using the "Management Best Practices" Resources...

##### Management Skills Inventory: Identifying Managerial Strengths & Opportunities

A survey of 75 members of the Stanford Graduate School of Business Advisory Council **rated self-awareness as the most important competency** for managers to develop. This assessment can help you clarify your understanding of your managerial skills and provide the starting point for a personal development plan.

##### Communication Tools

Strong communication skills and tools to prepare for conversations are needed for all managers as they work across the four management functions. WSU's Discussion Guidelines can be used as a map to illustrate the elements of a conversation. It's useful to consider each element when planning for particularly crucial conversations but this can also be easily adapted to everyday informal coaching situations. The Interactive

Discussion Pointers provide prompts for what to include when sharing positive and redirective coaching. Additional tools will be shared in the *Coaching@Wayne* module.

## Management Skills Inventory

*Designed to stimulate thinking about managerial strengths and opportunities*

### Instructions:

1. Read through the list of activities and assess your performance for each. **Mark an X** for each item in the appropriate blank based upon how frequently you demonstrate each skill. Some skills that you think are important may not be listed. Blank lines are provided in each category should you wish to add any item.
2. Go back over the entire list, choose:
  - a. Two to three items for which you feel most capable - and you know are the most needed in order to achieve WSU business expectations. **Circle** these.
  - b. Two to three items you would like most to improve at this time in light of current and anticipated Unit needs. Place an **asterisk** next to them.
3. Soon you'll be making a personal development plan. These strengths and opportunities will provide input into this activity.

<i>Skill Frequency:</i>	Almost Never	Sometimes	Always
<b>Planning Skills</b>			
1. Establish clear goals			
2. Determine specific objectives			
3. Involve other in the planning process			
4. Foresee barriers			
5. Develop contingency plans			
6. Integrate financial impacts into the plan			
7. What's not listed but should be?			

<i>Skill Frequency:</i>	Almost Never	Sometimes	Always
<b>Organizing Skills</b>			
8. Clarify team member roles			
9. Clarify process/workflow			
10. Establish/modify team member roles			



**Non-Academic Supervisory Essentials**

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11. Develop coordination processes between units			
12. Delegate tasks to others			
13. Develop systems to improve/simplify task accomplishment			
14. What's not listed but should be?			

*Skill Frequency:*

<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Always</b>
---------------------	------------------	---------------

**Directing/Guiding Performance Skills**

15. Provide timely, specific feedback			
16. Express praise or appreciation			
17. Consult with employees before making decisions that affect them			
18. Provide opportunities for growth and development			
19. Advocate for team members			
20. Raise topics that members seek to avoid			
21. What's not listed but should be?			

*Skill Frequency:*

<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Always</b>
---------------------	------------------	---------------

**Controlling/Monitoring/Improving Performance Skills**

22. Measure current performance			
23. Compare performance against a given benchmark			
24. Evaluate results on a regular basis			
25. Institute systems to automate the monitoring process			
26. Involve individuals performing the work in the monitoring			
27. Request individuals currently performing the work to offer recommendations for process improvement based upon a review of the data			
28. What's not listed but should be?			



### Strengths and Opportunities

#### Strengths:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Opportunities:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### What Now?

Now that you've reflected upon your managerial approach, consider seeking feedback from others. Asking trusted colleagues and staff about what they appreciate in you and what areas you might refine can help to validate your initial plan.

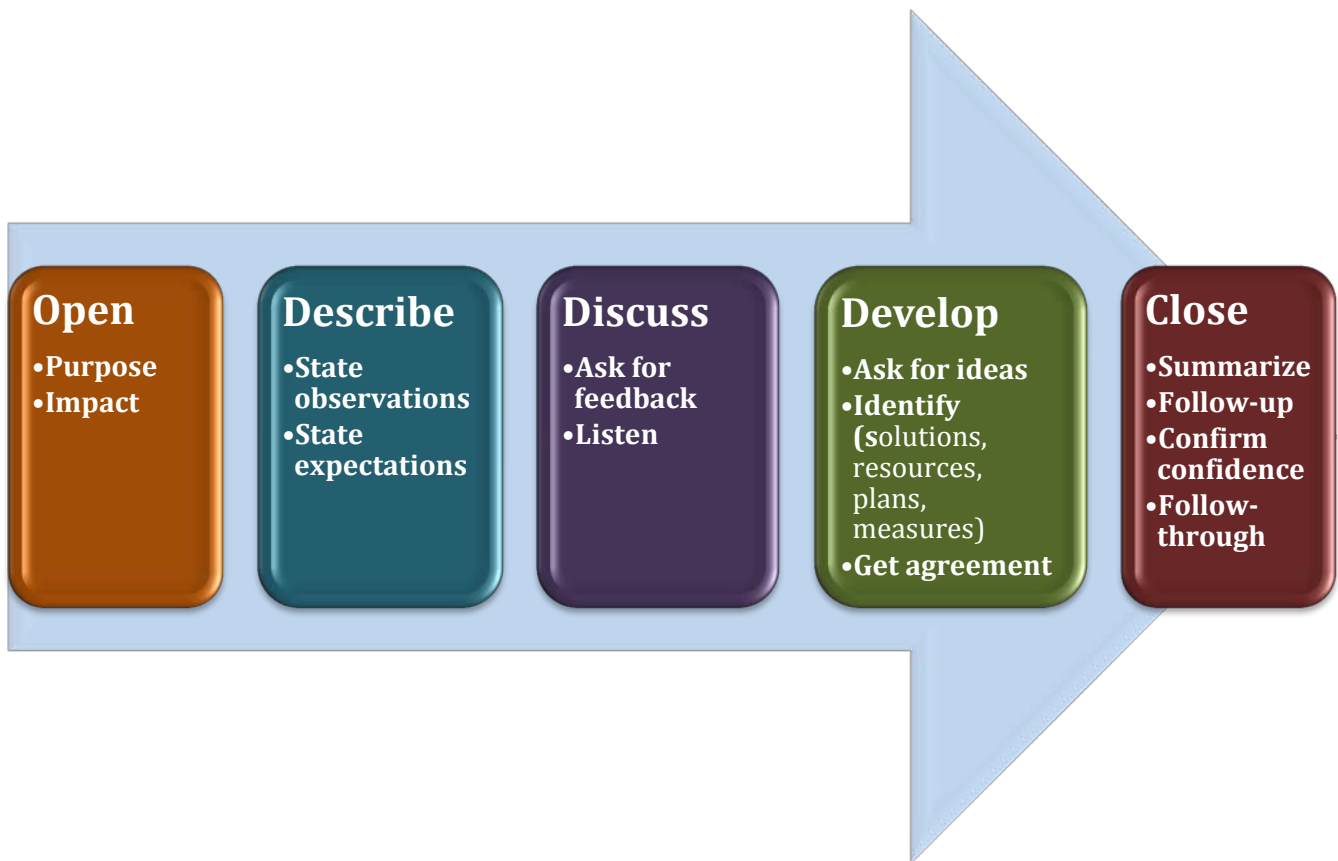
Utilize the space provided below to identify anything you might do differently to capitalize upon strengths and shore up areas for improvement.

## Communication Tools

Preparing for and holding a conversation is an overarching responsibility that crosses boundaries for the four management functions. We'll focus upon this in each of the Supervising@Wayne modules, however, below is a sneak peek into some of the key principles that we'll feature for your use in the interim.

Conversations typically flow with the following elements as shown below. This structure can be particularly helpful as you prepare for crucial conversations – but can also be used for day-to-day coaching discussions. Note that in most cases, these conversations are interactive – you'll ask questions to clarify, explore solutions and determine next steps. Doing so will help to ensure a complete understanding about the issue, negating the chances for any assumptions made, as well as to solicit buy-in for behavior change.

### Discussion Guidelines



## Interactive Discussion Pointers

Within each of the various types of coaching conversations you'll have, how you express your goals can have a direct impact on your success. Below are examples of situations for which you may have a discussion along with some tips for what you might include. We'll review specific examples and offer skill practice opportunities on this within each of the subsequent Supervising@Wayne modules.

### Recognizing Great Work:

- Acknowledge Good Thinking/Ideas
- Recognize Accomplishments/Contributions
- Express and Show Confidence
- Be Specific and Sincere

*Example: "Taking the initiative to help facilitate our group discussion today really helped us to stay on track. Thank you for stepping up!"*

### Addressing Behaviors/Outcomes That Haven't Gone as Well as Planned

- Focus on Facts
- Respect the Individual
- Address Positive Intent
- Clarify Motives
- Seek Input on Alternative Behaviors that Should be Demonstrated Next Time
- Ask for Input on Support Needed

*Example: "I agree that you're meeting our deadlines and that's very important to our ability to provide service to students. It's also important to make sure that our work is of the highest quality and accuracy. In light of the recent calculation errors, how can we learn from this experience to prevent it from happening again?"*

### Responding to an Individual Who is Emotionally-Charged

- Interject to Keep the Conversation on Point – or End the Discussion Until a Time When Cooler Heads Can Prevail
- Empathize with Positive Feelings/Intent
- Respond to Both Facts and Feelings
- Contain the Conversation to Ensure Minimum Disruption to Nearby Colleagues

*Examples: "I can see you have valid concerns about the communications plan. In terms of funding, we can see that there will be a need to seek avenues to promote our Unit that requires investment – however, we will also need to seek creative avenues that do not. Are you willing now to brainstorm with us on these – or shall we reconvene during a time when we can more calmly discuss it?"*



## Describing Your Personal Management Style

“Management is, above all, a practice where art, science and craft meet”

*Henry Mintzberg, Management Studies Professor, McGill University and renowned author. One of the “50 Most Influential Management Gurus” named by Harvard Business Review.*

Part of the art of management is reading people – and knowing yourself well enough to know how to adjust. The AcuMax Index (AI) is a tool that can help. It can help you understand your own tendencies and anticipate the needs and preferences of others.

AI measures:

1. A person’s natural wiring
2. The environment one best thrives within
3. How a person accepts ideas, processes thought, prefers to work and degree of information desired when making decisions

So, while we need to be fair and consistent in our approach in to all team members based upon performance and workplace expectations and adherence to University policy and procedure and collective bargaining agreement – the *way in which we deliver messages, assign responsibilities or monitor/follow up can be adapted* based upon the preferences of others.

We’ll create a profile for each of the four management functions as it pertains to your AI style. In doing so, please consider:

### Best Practices for Leveraging AcuMax Index...

- Finding the right team member **fit** by understanding and capitalizing upon individual uniqueness. AI is a great tool to assess and concentrate upon strengths – and to appreciate the need for **balance** in teams.
- Improving communications and relationships by better speaking the “**language**” of others. AI offers the opportunity to create a shared, positive lingo for communicating with others about differences. This can result in:
  - Fostering a higher exchange of ideas and **collaboration**
  - Enhancing employee **engagement**

## AcuMax Index

A unique profile tool that measures “hard wiring”. WSU has used it for many different professional development purposes on campus to date, including:

- Teambuilding
- Coaching
- Conflict Resolution
- Working With Difficult Team Members
- Precursor to Strategic Planning
- Leadership Development

- Preparing for improved implementation of strategic initiatives and **change**

### What's in it For Me?

No one management style works best.

The most self-aware managers are those who are most able to quickly adjust to changing circumstances and flex to the needs of others. And, as a result, they'll be more resilient and influential. This tool can also help you learn how to improve relationships and align personal strengths with the business needs of your Unit.

### Using the "Management Profile" Resources...

#### AcuMax Index (AI) Description

Reference this brief description of each channel to help appreciate your own strengths and opportunities. It can also be used to "read" others and "guesstimate" their preferences.

#### AcuMax Index Coaching Tips

Interaction tips are provided in this tool to help understand how best to partner with others.

#### Managerial Profile and Action Plan

Use this profile as a guideline of possible AcuMax Index strengths and opportunities as it relates to the four management functions. An action plan is recommended to further define personal opportunities.

## AcuMax Index Description

### Introducing the Four Channels and Work Preferences

Not sure if you're low or high for each of the four AI channels? If your "dot" is to the left of the vertical line – you're "low". If it's to the right of the line, you're "high". The further away the "dot" is – the more intensely one would prefer to exhibit the mindset or behaviors noted.

<p><b>A: Autonomy</b></p> <p><i>Applies to ideas, ways of doing things and control of one's environment</i></p>	
<p><b>Low A</b></p> <p><i>Are more accommodating and want the best idea, the best way of doing things and want team over control.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Orientation</li> <li>• Want Best Idea</li> <li>• Passively Aggressive</li> <li>• Conflict Minimizer</li> <li>• (Social-Focused: Seeks Harmony)</li> </ul>	<p><b>High A</b></p> <p><i>Want their ideas implemented, their way of doing things and want control over items in their environment important to them.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Their Idea is Best</li> <li>• Actively Aggressive</li> <li>• Accepts/Gives Conflict</li> <li>• (Task-Focused: Concentrated on My Results)</li> </ul>
<p><b>B: Communication</b></p> <p><i>How someone processes thought - the more external, the higher the need for people interaction</i></p>	
<p><b>Low B</b></p> <p><i>Are internal so time alone gives them time to think, figure things out for themselves, and retreat to some degree from the drain of energy face-to-face interaction creates.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internalize to Crystallize</li> <li>• Blank "Processing" Stare</li> <li>• Introversion</li> <li>• Direct</li> <li>• (Task-Focused: Prefers a Heads Down/Direct Approach)</li> </ul>	<p><b>High B</b></p> <p><i>Are external as they do best when verbalizing thoughts, like the interaction with people from getting and receiving help as well as the energy they get from face-to-face time.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbalize to Crystallize</li> <li>• Wants Response</li> <li>• Extroversion</li> <li>• Verbal Word Pictures</li> <li>• (Social-Focused: Motivated by Opportunities for People Interaction)</li> </ul>

**C: Patience/Pace**

*How someone processes work, the degree to which someone might be quick-tempered, and how much time a person wants to spend with others*

**Low C**

*Are much more impatient with a shorter attention span. Individuals accept pressure and (to a degree) kind of like it. The short attention span creates a shorter fuse – individuals can get annoyed when no action is being taken or during periods of stress. Profiles prefer large spans of control – a few minutes with a lot of people. Individuals do not feel they have time to affiliate with others – “got to go, things to do, people to see” is often the Low C mantra!*

- Impatient
- Juggler
- Quick Decisions
- Course Corrections to the Plan
- (Task-Focused: Concentrates on Getting Things Done)

**High C**

*Are much more patient and prefer to a sequential, methodical approach to work. While individuals may have a “long fuse”, when it does ignite – watch out! Profiles prefer smaller spans of control – longer times with fewer people. Individuals like to get to know people on a personal level. This affiliation helps to create more predictability and deeper relationships with a small circle of others in their environment.*

- Patient
- Sequential
- Deliberate Decision Maker
- Create & Follow Plan in Order
- (Social-Focused: Affiliation and Relationships are As Important as Task)

**D: Decision Making/Certainty**

*How someone makes decisions and the degree of structure preferred in their environment*

**Low D**

*Do not need certainty in rules, regulations, structure or decision making*

- Summary Sheet
- Proof Not Necessary
- Risk Decisions Easier
- Exceptions to Rules/Regulations
- (Social-Focused: Tends to be More Casual/ Informal)

**High D**

*Thrive best with certainty in rules, regulations, structure and decision making*

- Detailed information
- Wants Proof from SME
- Risk Decisions More Complex
- Follows Rules/Regulations
- (Task-Focused: Attentive to How Duties are Executed/Supported)



## AcuMax Index Coaching Tips

### Interaction Tips for Adapting to Team Member Preferences

	Low / Low Interaction	Low / High Interaction	High / High Interaction	Tips:
<b>Autonomy</b>	Two Low A's will be very accommodating. It may be helpful to set a timetable for decisions; agree to limit to only a few options then vote on the one that works best for all	<p><b>High A:</b> Allow conflict free idea exchange with Low A's.</p> <p><b>Low A:</b> Stand up for your ideas when you know they are better than anything being imposed upon you. Don't take High A conflict personally.</p>	Two High A's may fight to be heard/get their idea implemented. Since both like to put their "thumbprint" on things, consider: creating a general goal that allows each person some "say".	<p>Encourage participation &amp; allow time for it</p> <p>Ask participants to bring at least one idea to the meeting in writing – discussion then is only on <u>how</u> idea could work.</p>
<b>Communication</b>	Two Low B's will want time to think before responding. It may be helpful to allow prep time for discussion by sending agenda in advance.	<p><b>High B:</b> Allow Low B time to think.</p> <p><b>Low B:</b> Create several responses when High B's pressure for on the spot decisions, i.e. "Let me digest this..."</p>	Two High B's may struggle for "air time" when talking. Let each person finish their item & give time for the individual to verbalize a response.	Make communication an agenda item, Low B's may think about something so long they don't actually share it with others.
<b>Patience/Pace</b>	Two Low C's may have a tendency to over-commit. Make sure decisions aren't made too fast.	<p><b>High C:</b> Expect interruptions and the desire for a quick decision.</p> <p><b>Low C:</b> take a breath and give High C's time to switch gears.</p>	Two High C's are patient, calm, deliberate decision makers who operate best sequentially. Consider creating a timetable for decisions to ensure speed as well as accuracy.	Schedule discussion time in advance to allow High C's time to prepare. This will enable the most productive outcome (vs. interruptions).

	Low / Low Interaction	Low / High Interaction	High / High Interaction	Tips:
<b>Decision Making/ Certainty</b>	Two Low D's may only focus upon the summary sheet. Just be sure that each sheet matches the other. Clarify points that are too vague.	<p><b>High D:</b> Start giving the Low D a summary sheet instead of all the detail.</p> <p><b>Low D:</b> Clarify data needs to ensure that you provide targeted information.</p>	Two High D's might suffer from "paralysis by analysis" or too much information. Agree on what's important to prioritize data.	Communicate the "need to know" information and provide follow up support/data as needed

## Managerial Profile and Action Plan

*Designed to stimulate thinking about managerial strengths and opportunities and ways in which team members could be leveraged to maximize managerial capabilities*

# AcuMax Index

### High A

- Monitors results; pushes to reach deadlines

### High C

- Monitors process; evaluates if all the steps were followed

### High D

- Monitors execution/compliance in terms of how result was achieved

### Low A

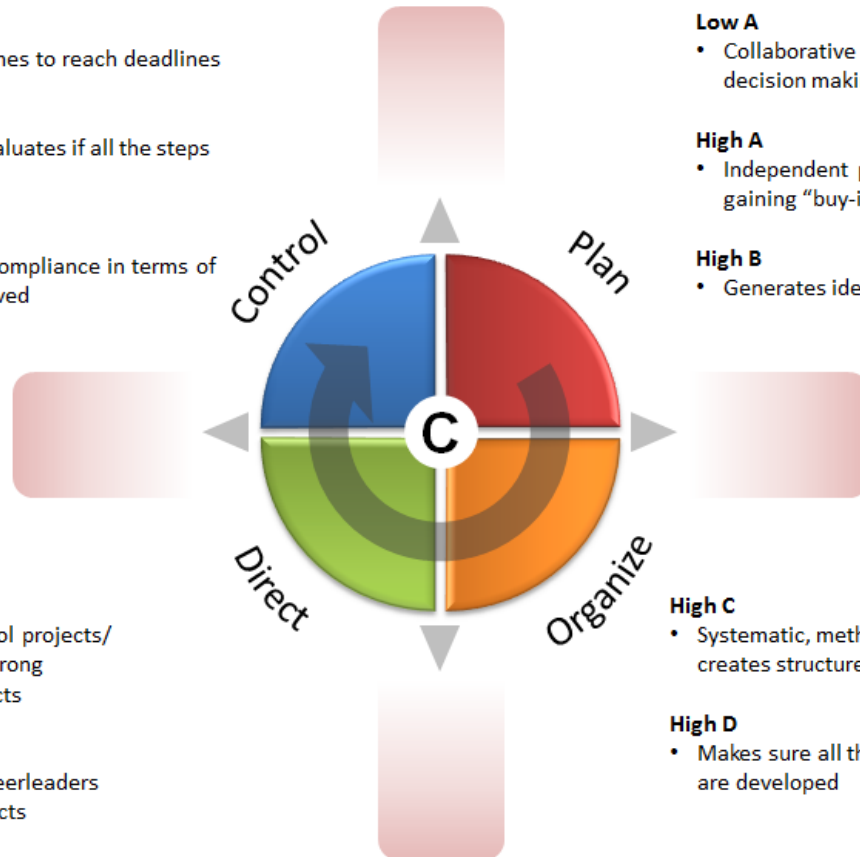
- Collaborative planner; decision making speed considerations

### High A

- Independent planner; gaining "buy-in" considerations

### High B

- Generates ideas through brainstorming



### High A

- Wants to direct/control projects/work environment; strong initiator of new projects

### High B

- Strong motivators/cheerleaders for plans, goals, projects

### High D

- Directs compliance; ensures proper execution of plans

### High C

- Systematic, methodical coordinators; creates structures/processes to support plan

### High D

- Makes sure all the plan execution points are developed

## AcuMax Index Drive Implications on Managerial Decision Making

A > D	D > A	High A = High D	Low A = Low D
Generalist	Specialist	Learned Decision Making	Go with the Flow
Outcome is more important than how it is achieved	How I get the result is as important as the result	In new and unknown situations, I'm challenged with finding the perfect outcome & may vacillate or second guess	Whatever the team wants is fine; data not needed to justify decision

**Action Plan**

*What does your AcuMax Index profile indicate as a possible **strength** when it comes to:*

*Based upon your profile, in what way would it be to your advantage to **adapt** a natural preference when:*

<b>Planning</b>		
<b>Organizing</b>		
<b>Directing</b>		
<b>Controlling</b>		



## Managing Across Generations

Generational diversity at work is growing as many older individuals are working longer while younger employees are increasingly joining the workforce. Teams are likely to include multiple generations in the years to come. The more you understand the unique perspectives, work styles, and goals of the generations you work with and manage, the more effective you will be as a manager as well as a team member.

### The Four Generations in the Workplace (and One Coming Soon!)

- Traditionalist – Born between 1909 and 1945
- Baby Boomer – Born between 1946 and 1964
- Generation X – Born between 1965 and 1980
- Generation Y – Born between mid-1980s and mid-1990s
- Generation Z – Born between mid-1990s and present (*Not yet in the workplace, but coming soon!*)

### Best Practices...

- **Appreciate generational differences.** Each generation has unique perspectives, values and strengths they can bring to the workforce. Learn about each – and foster an open dialogue with individuals to confirm your assumptions – to ensure that you know what motivates individuals at different ages and stages in their careers.
- **Avoid age stereotypes.** Keep an open mind and watch out for the common assumptions made about individuals based upon their age. Check out the “Debunking Common Age-Related Assumptions” to put your own unchecked bias to the test.
- **Manage to the unique strengths and needs of each generation.** One size doesn’t fit all when it comes to managing. The best managers will be those who can flex to the preferences and needs of different employees with different solutions – while being consistent and fair across all. This might mean flexing on work hours, dress codes or even rewards so that diverse preferences can be respected. Remember that different generations of employees will be in

### Millennials...

Employees born after 1980 are the fastest growing age segment of the workforce

*EBSCO Publishing, 2013*

different stages of life and may require that employers offer some scheduling flexibility to manage their personal time. But maintain parity so other employees don’t feel alienated. Boomers, who are thinking of retirement, may want to cut the number of hours they work in exchange for reduced pay. Gen Xers who need to leave work early to attend a parent/teacher function can agree to make up lost time at another date. Support Millennials who may want to pursue another degree part time and extend the same educational opportunities to other employees.

- **Support learning and career development across all age groups.** Provide opportunities for experienced and less experienced individuals to work together. Mixing generations is a great way to transfer knowledge and provides opportunities for two-way mentoring.
- **Build a strong multi-generational work group culture.** Get to know individuals and what motivates them to create action plans for retaining valuable talent. Ensure that all team members can contribute and use their strengths toward mutual goals. Recognize individuals for what makes them unique and valuable to the group publically as well as one-on-one.
- **Reconsider long-standing routines that may no longer work.** Experts say Millennials and Gen X'ers dislike the formality of regular meetings, especially when there's nothing to discuss. Limit meetings to when there's a real need.
- **Recognize accomplishments.** Even simple gestures like a pat on the back or congratulatory email can help boost productivity with Gen Xers. Boomers may seek status, so they may respond best to an office-wide memo that announces they're meeting or exceeding goals. Millennials may seek validation and approval, so they will most likely appreciate increased responsibility and additional training opportunities as well as more frequent employee reviews and coaching/ feedback.
- **Give all employees a voice.** Regardless of age and tenure, give all employees a forum in which to present ideas, concerns and complaints. Department heads should facilitate open communication throughout the office and set aside time to provide honest feedback.
- **Don't apply a blanket communication-method policy.** Boomers may prefer to communicate by phone or in person. Millennials grew up being in constant communication with peers and coworkers so are accustomed to emailing, texting or sending instant messages.
- **Don't make assumptions** and confuse character issues like immaturity, laziness or intractability with generational traits. Whereas Boomers may see a 60-hour work week as a prerequisite to achieving success, many hard-working Millennials may prefer a more balanced life that includes reasonable working hours—with occasional bouts of overtime—and weekends off.

### What's in it For Me?

Understanding what motivates and drives each member of your team helps you to discover new and better ways to spark higher levels of engagement. Adapting to individual needs and preferences helps to create a climate most conducive to productivity, employee satisfaction and retention.

### Using the "Managing Across Generations" Resources...

#### Generations at a Glance

A description of the four generations in the workplace is shared to aid in the development of a customized coaching plan aligned with individual needs and preferences.



## Generations at a Glance

A description of the four generations in the workplace is shared to aid in the development of a customized coaching plan aligned with individual needs and preferences.

### Generations at a Glance: Traditionalists (1909 – 1945)

#### Influencers

- WWII, Korean War, Great Depression, New Deal, Rise of Corporations, Space Age,
- Reared by parents that just survived the Great Depression.
- Experienced hard times while growing up which were followed by times of prosperity.

#### *Major Influencers*

- Family
- Church

#### Core Values

- Adhere to rules
- Conformers/Conformity
- Contributing to the Collective
- Good is important
- Dedication/Sacrifice
- Delayed Reward
- Discipline
- Don't question authority
- Duty before pleasure
- Family Focus
- "Giving Back" is important
- Law and Order
- Loyalty
- Patriotism
- Patience
- Respect for authority
- Responsibility
- Savers
- Stabilizing
- Trust in Government

#### Communication Style

- Discrete
- Present your story in a formal, logical manner
- Show respect for their age/experience (address as Mr., Sir, Mrs.)
- Use good grammar and manners (no profanity)
- Deliver you message based on the history/traditions of the company and how they can fit
- Don't waste their time
- Use inclusive language (we, us)
- Focus-words not body language
- Slow to warm up
- Memo
- Like hand-written notes, less email and more personal interaction

### Work Ethic

- Dedicated
- Pay your dues
- Work hard
- Respect Authority
- Hard work
- Age=seniority
- Company first
- Slow to adopt technology

### Respect for Workplace Authority

- Authority is based on seniority and tenure.

### View of Time Spent At Work

- Punch the clock
- Get the job done

### View of Work/Life Balance – Work to Live

- Work hard to maintain job security

## Generations at a Glance: Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964)

### Influencers

- Civil Rights, Vietnam War, Sexual Revolution, Cold War/Russia, Space Travel
- Highest divorce rate and 2nd marriages in history.
- Post War Babies who grew up to be radicals of the 70's and yuppies of the 80's.
- "The American Dream" was promised to them as children and they pursue it. As a result they are seen as being greedy, materialistic and ambitious.

### *Major Influencers*

- Family
- Education

### Core Values

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-war</li> <li>• Anti-government</li> <li>• Anything is possible</li> <li>• Equal rights</li> <li>• Equal opportunities</li> <li>• Extremely loyal to their children</li> <li>• Involvement</li> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Personal Gratification</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question Everything</li> <li>• Spend now, worry later</li> <li>• Team Oriented</li> <li>• Transformational</li> <li>• Trust no one over 30</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Work</li> <li>• Want to "make a difference"</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### Communication Style

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diplomatic</li> <li>• In person</li> <li>• Speak open – direct style</li> <li>• Use body language to communicate</li> <li>• Present Options (flexibility)</li> <li>• Use E-Comm's/face-to-face</li> <li>• Answer questions thoroughly and expect to be pressed for details</li> <li>• Avoid Manipulative/controlling language</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like the personal touch from Managers</li> <li>• Get consensus-include them or they may get offended</li> <li>• Establish a friendly rapport</li> <li>• OK to use first names</li> <li>• Learn what is important to them</li> <li>• Emphasize the company's vision and mission and how they can fit in</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

### Work Ethic

- Driven
- Workaholic-60-hr work weeks
- Work long hours to establish self-worth and identity and fulfillment
- Work ethic = worth ethic
- Quality
- Motivated by position, perks and prestige

### Respect for Workplace Authority

- Originally skeptical of authority but are becoming similar to Traditionalists in that Time equals authority

### View of Time Spent At Work

- Workaholics
- Invented 50-hr work week
- Visibility is the key

### View of Work/Life Balance

- Were hesitant of taking too much time off work for fear of losing their place on the corporate team. As a result, there is an imbalance between work and family.

## Generations at a Glance: Generation X (1965 – 1980)

### Influencers

- Watergate, Energy Crisis, Dual Income families and single parents, First Generation of Latchkey Kids, Y2K, Energy Crisis, Activism, Corp. Downsizing, End of Cold War, Mom’s work, Increase divorce rate.
- Their perceptions are shaped by growing up having to take care of themselves early and watching their politicians lie and their parents get laid off.
- Came of age when USA was losing its status as the most powerful and prosperous nation in the world.
- The first generation that will NOT do as well financially as their parents did.

### *Major Influencers*

- Media

### Core Values

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Highly Educated</li> <li>• High job expectations</li> <li>• Independent</li> <li>• Informality</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of organizational loyalty</li> <li>• Pragmatism</li> <li>• Seek life balance</li> <li>• Self-reliance</li> <li>• Skepticism/Cynical</li> <li>• Suspicious of Boomer values</li> <li>• Think Globally</li> <li>• Techno literacy</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### Communication Style

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blunt/Direct</li> <li>• Immediate</li> <li>• Use straight talk, present facts</li> <li>• Use email as #1 tool</li> <li>• Learn their language &amp; speak it</li> <li>• Use informal communication style</li> <li>• Talk in short sound bites</li> <li>• Share info immediately and often</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the potential to bridge the generation gap b/w youngest and oldest workers.</li> <li>• Don’t micro-manage</li> <li>• Use direct, straightforward approach</li> <li>• Avoid buzz words and company jargon</li> <li>• Tie your message to “results”</li> <li>• Emphasize “WIIFM” in terms of training and skills to build their resume</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

### Work Ethic

- Balance
- Work smarter and with greater output, not work longer hours.
- Eliminate the task
- Technologically adept
- Self-reliant
- Want structure & direction
- Skeptical
- Individualism

### Respect for Workplace Authority

- Skeptical of authority figures
- Will test authority repeatedly.

### View of Time Spent At Work

- Project oriented
- Get paid to get job done
- Prefer flexible work schedules and telecommuting

### View of Work/Life Balance – Work to Live

- Because of parents who are Boomer workaholics, they focus on clearer balance between work and family. Do not worry about losing their place on the corporate team if they take time off.

## Generations at a Glance: Generation Y (1980s – mid 1990s)

### Influencers

- Digital Media, child focused world, school shootings, terrorist attacks, AIDS, 9/11 terrorist attacks.
- Typically grew up as children of divorce
- They hope to be the next great generation & to turn around all the “wrong” they see in the world today.
- They grew up more sheltered than any other generation as parents strived to protect them from the evils of the world.
- Came of age in a period of economic expansion.
- Kept busy as kids
- First generation of children with schedules.

### *Major Influencers*

- Friends
- Entertainment and sports stars
- Personal agendas

### Core Values

- Achievement
- Avid consumers
- Civic Duty
- Confidence
- Diversity
- Extreme fun
- Fun!
- High morals
- Highly tolerant
- Hotly competitive
- Like personal attention
- Self-confident
- Sociability
- Members of global community
- Most educated generation
- Extremely techno savvy
- Extremely spiritual
- Now!
- Optimism
- Realism
- Street smarts

### Communication Style

- Polite
- Use positive, respectful, motivational, electronic communication style. (Cell phones, email, IM, text) these are “fun”
- Be humorous-show you are human
- Be careful about the words you use and the way you say it (they are not good at personal communication because of

## Non-Academic Supervisory Essentials

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- Communicate in person if the message is very important
- Use email and voice mail as #1 tools
- Don't talk down-they will resent it
- Show respect through language and they will respect you
- Use action verbs
- Use language to portray visual pictures
- technical ways of communicating)
- Be positive
- Determine your goals and aspirations and tie message to them
- 
- Prefer to learn in networks, teams using multi-media while being entertained and excited

### Work Ethic

- Ambitious
- What's next?
- Tech-Savvy/Plugged in 24 hours a day
- Multitasking
- Tenacity
- Entrepreneurial

### Respect for Workplace Authority

- Will test authority but often seek out authority figures when looking for guidance.

### View of Time Spent At Work

- Effective workers but gone by 5PM on dot.
- View work as a "gig" or something that fills the time between weekends.
- Prefer flexible work schedules and telecommuting

### View of Work/Life Balance – Work to Live

- Not only balance with work and life, but balance with work, life and community involvement and self-development. Flex time, job sharing, and sabbaticals will be requested more by this generation.



## Coaching Tips for Managing Traditionalist (1909-1945)

*Keeping members of the Traditionalist generation fully engaged with the changing work place is important, particularly because they have years of practical experience.*

**Tip 1: Create Goals.** Traditionalist workers are every bit as ambitious as those for other members of the team.

- Offer them learning experiences such as the opportunity to participate in conferences, Webinars, and other developmental programs.

**Tip 2: Capture the Wisdom.** Don't lose the practical experience and wisdom that traditionalists have.

- Link traditionalists with younger employees—such as mentoring and job shadowing.
- Develop information and/or knowledge transfer plans.
- Ask them for feedback and suggestions.

**Tip 3: Encourage Flexibility.** Convince them that focusing on the team in the short term is the most effective way to distinguish them in the long term.

- Some will be interested in full-time employment and others potentially preferring part-time or other more flexible work arrangements.

**Tip 4: You're in Charge.** Don't question your own authority.

- Employees who are older than you "aren't your parents."
- You can actually tell them what to do.

## Coaching Tips for Managing Boomers (1946-1964)

*Showing respect for their years of service, skills, knowledge, and wisdom is key to successfully managing Baby Boomers.*

**Tip 1: Recognition.** This is very important for Baby Boomer employees.

- Recognize achievements personally and publicly.
- Listening to their ideas and suggestions is another way that you can recognize the contributions of individuals.
- Embrace and encourage implementation of their best ideas.

**Tip 2: Likes Competition.** Challenge them to contribute as part of a team to solve organizational problems.

- Convince them that focusing on the team in the short term is the most effective way to distinguish them in the long term.
- Offer opportunities to serve as a coach as part of the change process.
- Speak to their belief in individual worth to motivate them: “We need your expertise on this...”

**Tip 3: Not As Flexible.** They value face time in the office and may not welcome work flexibility or work/life balance trends.

- Likes Power Point presentations and handbooks.
- Prefers one to one and face to face meetings.
- Seeks high levels of responsibility, perks, praise and challenges.

**Tip 4: Leadership.** Preferred leadership style is collegial and consensual.

- Gain their confidence by demonstrating compassion and understanding.
- Support work–life balance.

## Coaching Tips for Managing Gen X (1965-1979)

*Generation X's are the employees that are entering the workforce today; they are the future. They aren't going away, nor are they likely to conform to the previous generation's definition of work.*

### Tip 1: Value the Individual and Nurture Relationships.

- They don't like to be characterized.
- They don't want to be treated as a single entity, but want to be looked at as individuals.
- Their focus on relationships over achievement is what leads Boomers to complain about their laziness.

### Tip 2: Challenging Work. This generation has short attention span.

- They want new challenges and the opportunity to build new skills.
- Training is one of the best motivators.
- They have a tremendous capacity to process lots of information and concentrate on multiple tasks.
- They don't want to spend a lot of time talking about things or having meetings.
- They want to get in, do the work, and move on to the next thing.

### Tip 3: Freedom to Manage Time and Work. This generation does not want managers who constantly check what they're doing.

- These young workers are not used to being closely supervised and are remarkably good at working on their own.

### Tip 4: Feedback and Recognition. Generation X seems to crave time with their bosses.

- They can never get enough feedback on their performance.
- Recognition and rewards must arrive quickly.
- Employee of the month doesn't do anything for them.

## Coaching Tips for Managing Millennials (1980-2000)

*Take advantage of their positive attitude, ability to multitask, technical skills, and multicultural awareness. Don't be afraid to defy the golden rule and treat them the way they want to be treated, as opposed to the way you want to be treated.*

**Tip 1: Provide feedback** early, and often.

- Millennials want to learn, grow, and develop.
- They will not benefit from **only** an annual review.
- They expect to be given constructive feedback on a daily basis.
- Be open, honest and direct and meet face-to-face.
- Share your management philosophy and style.

**Tip 2: Give them structure**, millennials want to be told exactly what to do.

- In the workplace, they struggle with taking initiative and prioritizing.
- Schedule "check points" for their assignments, and make time to answer their questions.

**Tip 3: Tell them why**, i.e. Millennials have been taught to ask why.

- Growing up, they got answers other than "because I said so."
- They genuinely want to know the reasoning behind why things are the way they are at work.
- When they ask why, they expect an answer.
- Never give them a project without explaining the big picture.
- Give definitive reasons for policies and procedures.

**Tip 4: Offer career advice**, not all millennials are job hoppers.

- Offer opportunities for growth and development according to their individual needs.
- Show them a way that will allow them to change paths within the same company.
- Encourage them to join industry and professional organizations.

**Tip 5: Offer flexibility**, millennials value a parallel life, and work-life balance is incredibly important.

- They are digital natives who believe that technology allows work to be done anytime, anywhere.
- Consider flexible work hours and trust them to work from home on a case-by-case basis.

## What Does Your Team Look Like?

*Take a few moments to create a quick "snapshot" of your team. This matrix can then be used to help you develop an effective strategy for leading & coaching a diverse group of employees.*

How many team members from each generation do you have?

Traditionalists (1909-1945) \_\_\_\_

Generation X (1965-1979) \_\_\_\_

How Many Baby Boomers (1946-1964) \_\_\_\_

Millennials (1980-2000) \_\_\_\_

**Describe the strengths of your team:**

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**Describe areas where your team may need improvement:**

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**Based on the make-up of your team, you will implement a leadership and coaching plan by...**

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**Communication**

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**Delegation**

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**Motivation**

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**Collaboration**

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**Other**

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## Accelerate e-Resources for Supervising Essentials

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*For a general overview of Supervisory/Management Development eResources, consider the following items from WSUs eLearning library, Accelerate!*

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### eBooks

- **First Line Supervision, 5th Edition** by Charles M. Cadwell (2006)
- **The Essential Supervisor's Handbook: A Quick and Handy Guide for Any Manager or Business Owner** by Brette McWhorter Sember, Terrence J. Sember (2007)
- **Carrots and Sticks Don't Work: Build a Culture of Employee Engagement with the Principles of Respect** by Paul Marciano (2010)
- **Motivating a Multicultural Workforce** by Jinsoo Terry (2011)
- **From Bud to Boss: Secrets to a Successful Transition to Remarkable Leadership** by Kevin Eikenberry, Guy Harris (2011)
- **First Time Manager, 6th Edition** by Loren B. Belker, Jim McCormick, Gary S. Topchik (2012)
- **The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels** Michael Watkins (2006)
- **The New Leader's 100-Day Action Plan: How to Take Charge, Build Your Team, and Get Immediate Results, 3rd Edition** by George B. Bradt, Jayme A. Check, Jorge E. Pedraza (2011)

### eCourses

- **First Time Manager Series (Understanding a Manager's Role, Meeting Expectations and Challenges)** (1 hour each)
- **Leadership Essentials: Creating Your Own Leadership Development Plan** (1 hour)
- **Building Trust Incrementally** (4 min)





## Additional Resources

### Attachment 1

White, Byron P., and Peter D. Eckel. *Collective Foresight: The Leadership Challenges for Higher Education's Future*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 2008. Print.

### Attachment 2

Yeado, Joseph, Kati Haycock, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot. "Learning From High-Performing and Fast-Gaining Institutions." *The Education Trust* (2014): 1-15. Web.  
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### Attachment 3

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<[http://www.academicimpressions.com/PDF/pdf\\_serve.php?fn=AI-TheBubbleWeArentTalkingAbout-0613-Print&qq=18699v274891yT](http://www.academicimpressions.com/PDF/pdf_serve.php?fn=AI-TheBubbleWeArentTalkingAbout-0613-Print&qq=18699v274891yT)>.

### Attachment 4

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<<https://hbr.org/2005/01/managing-oneself>>.

### Attachment 5

Buckingham, Marcus. "What Great Managers Do." *Harvard Business Review* (2005): n. pag. Web.  
<<https://hbr.org/2005/03/what-great-managers-do>>.

First in a Series of Essays:  
Discussing Higher Education's Future



# Collective Foresight:

*The* Leadership Challenges  
*for* Higher Education's  
**FUTURE**





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Discussing Higher Education's Future

# Collective Foresight:

*The* Leadership Challenges  
*for* Higher Education's  
**FUTURE**

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American Council on Education

 **AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION**  
The Unifying Voice for Higher Education

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# Preface

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Recent widely disseminated reports—such as the National Academies’ *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* and *Beyond Bias and Barriers*, the Spellings Commission’s *A Test of Leadership*, and *Mortgaging Our Future*, by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance—all forewarn of impending challenges facing higher education and highlight its shortcomings. Converging trends identified in these reports and elsewhere will undoubtedly shape American higher education in the future. The drive for more assessment, accountability, and transparency; the changing relationships between states and their institutions, including the “privatization” of public higher education; demographic changes among students, faculty, and senior administrators, including racial and ethnic diversity and the rise of a new generation and the impending retirements within another; advances in technology and the presence of science in everyday life; and the effects of globalization are just a few of these significant trends. Equally important are the unknown or emerging issues that will profoundly affect higher education in the not-too-distant future. Campus leaders have not only the challenge of responding to the impending future, but also the responsibility for shaping that future.

For the past four years, the American Council on Education (ACE) has held a series of roundtable conversations for presidents and other higher education leaders to explore the short-term implications of many of these trends—with a particular focus on accountability, public funding and privatization, market-based state policy, competition, and public confidence in higher education—and identify the work of leaders. Some of the questions discussed by roundtable participants have included:

- Where do state and higher education needs converge, where do they diverge, and how can higher education close the gap? Given trends in public funding, what is the appropriate balance among autonomy, accountability, and public funding?
- How does higher education renew, maintain, or in some cases, regain the confidence and respect of the public and state policy makers? How do the realities of the marketplace and current approaches to accountability complicate the situation?
- Given the rise of market forces, how do campus leaders move their institutions toward important public goals and objectives and maintain competitiveness? What tensions exist among academic prerogatives, the interests and needs of the public, and marketplace opportunities?

The conversations to date have been illuminating and resulted in a series of widely read essays, available on the ACE web site (see [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu) and select Center for Effective Leadership from



the Programs & Services menu, then click on Presidential Roundtables). The three most recent essays are:

- *The Times Demand Innovation: Responding to Declining Resources and Heightened Accountability* (2007).
- *Toward Higher Ground: Reclaiming Public Confidence in a Competitive Environment* (2006).
- *Peering Around the Bend: The Leadership Challenges of Privatization, Accountability, and Market-based State Policy* (2005).

The questions explored in the previous roundtables have been important, yet their focus has been on immediate concerns. Just as important, however, is the need to project what these—and other—trends portend for higher education over the next 15 to 20 years and the role of campus leaders in framing and delivering the kind of future that higher education desires. Little evidence exists to suggest that any of the developments outlined above will subside. Instead, some current trends will strengthen, while other new trends, now barely visible, will emerge as important. What are the possible future scenarios for American higher education? How can leaders best prepare and position their institutions for the present while keeping an eye on the future? How might leaders work to best shape public policy to advance both higher education's common interests and individual institutional missions? How might leadership best lay a solid foundation today that will withstand an unknown tomorrow?

During a daylong conversation held in April 2007, we invited campus presidents to think broadly about trends affecting all of higher education and their implication for presidential leadership. This conversation provided an opportunity for leaders to reflect with colleagues from a range of institutions on what their visions for their own campuses might collectively mean for American higher education.

We thank Bette Landman, president emerita of Arcadia University (PA), who served as facilitator for this roundtable and a previous discussion on innovation in times of constrained resources and heightened accountability. We also thank roundtable participants Larry Bacow, Steve Curtis, George Dennison, Phil Glotzbach, David Maxwell, Judith Ramaley, and Lou Anna Simon for their responses to a previous draft of this essay. The TIAA-CREF Institute, under the leadership of Vice President and Executive Director Madeleine d'Ambrosio, supported this essay as well as the roundtable. We are grateful for the generous support provided by TIAA-CREF Institute and d'Ambrosio's continued interest in ACE's leadership activities.

For additional information on the ACE Presidential Roundtable Series and the subsequent essays, or if you are interested in participating in future conversations, please contact Peter Eckel, director of programs and initiatives in the American Council on Education's Center for Effective Leadership, at [leadership\\_programs@ace.nche.edu](mailto:leadership_programs@ace.nche.edu) or (202) 939-9728.

## Introduction:

# A Focus on the Future

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University and college presidents are not clairvoyant. They cannot predict the future. Yet, increasingly, they must lead as though they can see well into the future. That is because the fortunes of higher education rest, in large part, on how well leaders today can anticipate and shape the trends of tomorrow. College presidents are fully aware of this. The stakes are high. For many, the very question of whether their institutions will thrive (or, in some cases, survive) hinges on their ability to make decisions today that will position their institutions to contend with changes that are over the horizon. The current environment—with its increasing competition, insufficient resources, and heightened accountability—creates increased pressure to “get it right,” and institutions have few resources to spend on risky ventures. Furthermore, it will be increasingly difficult to recover from miscalculations. Neither do the circumstances of today allow presidents to play it safe and find comfort in the status quo.

The future is something to be both excited about and wary of. Presidents, for the most part, are an optimistic lot. However, a few at the roundtable on which this essay was based were pessimistic about the academy’s prospects, predicting that some forces are going to deal a severe blow to higher education—one from which colleges and universities might not recover. Others, instead, believed that the winds of change already were moving institutions in ways that will serve them well in the unfolding future and that campus leaders, through individual and collective effort, can influence future circumstances. There was consensus among the participants regarding the major trends affecting higher education and implications of those trends for moving forward. Those at the roundtable also generally shared the prediction that American higher education has the capacity to respond to the changing world, is resilient enough to survive the challenges, and, with insightful and thoughtful leaders, can position itself to continue its three-century run as a relevant social institution. However, to accomplish this, the academy may need to transform itself in some dramatic ways. For this, it has much work to do.

The next two sections reflect the collective wisdom of the assembled presidents. First, this essay explores the trends most likely to shape higher education over the next 20 years or so. These trends reflect changes both within the academy and in the larger world. The second section outlines the agreed-upon actions that campus leaders might consider to position their institutions now for the future.



# Focusing the Crystal Ball

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By definition, collective dialogue brings together views informed by different perspectives and experiences that become shuffled and combined to lead to a more nuanced understanding. The images of the future that appear in a figurative crystal ball become clearer as more people gaze into it. The trends identified below reflect the cumulative wisdom of presidents looking at and understanding their own worlds, which are very much bound to institutional mission and geographic location and can be very different from one another. While the presidents found much to be optimistic about in the future—high-caliber faculty, dedicated alumni, a recognition by the public of high quality, a continued demand for undergraduate and graduate education, and a dedicated cadre of both present and emerging leaders—the roundtable conversation focused predominately on the challenges facing higher education. This attention given to forthcoming challenges signaled an implicit consensus that U.S. higher education cannot rest on its laurels and that, to remain effective in the future, it must directly confront the challenges it faces. The challenges identified fall into three broad categories—funding, the public and its perceptions, and knowledge and information.

## Funding

*Escalating costs and rising tuition.* “The biggest issue,” said Skidmore College (NY) President Philip A. Glotzbach, “is cost containment.” Few in the room disagreed with him. From health care to utilities to new technology and the physical plant, the cost of managing colleges and universities is growing at a rapid pace, with the majority of campuses unable to maintain their current speed for much longer. Meanwhile, each year, state and federal legislators take less fiscal responsibility by either not raising tuition or challenging institutions not to do so. Students and their families face a greater burden in paying for higher education at a time when median family income is holding steady. The rising costs and the current nature of competition in which institutions are pressured to discount tuition, invest in merit aid, and offer top-flight amenities, create a fiscal calculus for disaster.

*Outcome-driven funding.* No president expressed a belief that the trend of insufficient public support for colleges and universities will significantly reverse itself. And the public support that might exist in the future may be strongest for efforts that directly produce tangible returns on investment, particularly in areas that meet state priorities, such as economic growth or workforce development. As one president said, “I have been asked by one state legislator, ‘Why are you concerned about undergraduates?’” the implication being that undergraduate instruction is the least important activity of colleges and universities, given immediate workforce and

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economic needs. State policy may increasingly focus on short-term priorities as governments appear not to display the political discipline to devote attention to long-term effectiveness. In part, this trend is driven by parochial interests and the crises of the day, but it also may reflect the incapacity of public policy makers to take a long view due to factors such as term limits, budget cycles, and pent-up demands related to other underfunded priorities (such as K–12 education, state infrastructure, etc.) that are still affected by past cuts.

Concurrently, needed revenue may well come from private sources that expect something for their investment, a trend many presidents are seeing not only in contracts with corporations but also in donations from private individuals. If *quid pro quo* becomes the new funding principle, then successful universities will be those that most effectively show evidence of their ability to deliver benefits to either the state or private supporters. “We make grandiose statements about what our higher education systems do, but we don’t have a lot of evidence that we’ve done it

and if we do, how we made it happen,” said George M. Dennison, president of the University of Montana.

Providing this justification will require campaigns based on solutions, said Lee Todd, president of the University of Kentucky. “You have got to find something that you can measure so that we can go to our legislators and document our contribution,” he said. “We have to sell higher education to the legislators so they will provide some funding.” Todd, for example, spoke of a pool of resources to fund faculty research that addresses pressing state problems, thus linking institutional strengths with state needs.

But such a reciprocal relationship raises questions as well: What are the implications of not being able to deliver on the problems handed to higher education, asked one president. The social problems are tough—declining schools, criminal rehabilitation, poverty, job creation. Solutions are not easy to develop and progress can be limited. Thus, if higher education is able to convince policy makers that it can solve these problems with adequate support, it risks becoming associated with failed efforts or the inability to make notable progress.

Finally, this changed financial calculus raises some key questions for campus leaders, particularly regarding the extent to which colleges and universities become entrepreneurial. How do institutions with financial constraints balance the pursuit of social missions with the pursuit of additional resources that have the potential to distort that mission? Consider, for example, the donor who makes a sizable gift to an athletic program while the institution is struggling to meet its need-based financial aid goals. Such a tension is what Lou Anna K. Simon, president of Michigan State University, calls the balance between “our entrepreneurial self and our public

self.” She added, “The questions that we need to grapple with are: What are the ethics of both of these [roles]? When is a good deal not a good deal?”

*An unforgiving marketplace.* Competition in higher education may quickly become survival of the fittest, and many institutions simply may not be able to survive. First, institutions will not be able to move slowly and methodically into the marketplace as they risk being left behind. “The market is going to be so unforgiving,” said Montana’s Dennison, “that if you don’t choose well, you’re going to get shredded.” Successful institutional leaders will develop the foresight to know when to act and when to pass on what might be considered an opportunity by others. Rather than do as others do (such as jumping into full-scale distance learning or opening degree programs in China), savvy leaders will develop their own indicators of when an opportunity might be beneficial.

Second, leaders will have to figure out how to respond to what Michigan State’s Simon called the “tyranny of parochialism,” in which institutions pursue their own agendas in order to compete, even though those agendas may work against a collective good. Market dynamics, she said, “make it difficult to operate as a collective because there is no longer a common interest across higher education. We may have lost a bit of our own common good.” Such individual action creates a fragmentation that also threatens the collaboration among institutions that is necessary for collective advancement. Many issues affect higher education broadly and, without the collective ability to respond, higher education is at a loss. For instance, colleges and universities are better able to shape favorable public policy through joint efforts rather than from a position of individual interest, but future trends may work against this cooperative approach.

Third, at the same time, institutions will have to find ways to get out from under the counter-pressure that works against institutions trying to chart their own courses. Simon also spoke of a “‘tyranny of accountability’ that really pushes against all of the differentiation created from the new innovation.” Rigid accountability efforts can create narrow definitions of what is acceptable, focus institutional priorities in ways that don’t make sense given their missions and students, and, at an extreme, limit the ways in which institutions remain faithful to their missions.

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## The Public and Its Perceptions

*Access and social fragmentation.* Access is not only a public policy priority but also an important value of higher education. However, the realities of rising costs, insufficient public funding, and heightened competition work together to put that value at risk. “I see a certain train wreck coming between real financial need and commitment to merit aid,” said David Maxwell, president of Drake University. The result may be a two-tiered system, with some schools offering well-financed education to a small, elite group of students, and others meeting the needs of a mass market and doing so with significantly fewer resources per student. “I fear we are moving in a direction that will lead to a very stratified higher education experience where, for a small number of people, it still becomes possible to go off and have a very classic, residential experience. And that’s wonderful and valuable,” said Steven G. Poskanzer, president of the State University of New York at New Paltz. “Nevertheless, the percentage of people who will have that opportunity will decrease and we will see almost a mass education versus an elite education. What will that mean for the fabric of the society?” Even community colleges—in which access and affordability have long been points of pride—are struggling with values and priorities. Stephen M. Curtis, president of the Community College of Philadelphia, noted that his college has seen tuition increase by 55 percent over the past five years.

*Changing demographics.* The nation’s changing demographics will affect higher education significantly, if not dramatically. The tendency is to think about demographics in terms of race and ethnicity, which are important factors. For example, the number of high school students from diverse racial backgrounds is increasing, and the population of many states is being shaped by migration and immigration patterns, with some states becoming “majority minority.” However, other trends also are significant and complicate the American mosaic. Some states are experiencing tremendous population growth not just among people of color but also among all their citizens. Other states, mostly in the North, are facing the reverse, with predicted declines in population.

The forthcoming retirements of the baby boomers and the rise of other generations is further shaping the demographic picture. As baby boomers age, many are leaving the workforce. At the same time, others of that age are unable to do so for economic reasons and are returning to college for more education and training. Health care, a priority for aging boomers, is competing directly with higher education in the public policy arena. Baby boomers also predominate in the population of senior faculty and campus administrators, while new faculty hires are members of Generation X and the traditional-age students enrolling now are known as the Millennials. Each group has its own set of expectations, priorities, and ways of thinking, which may be at odds with one another in the classroom and elsewhere on campus. Furthermore, ACE data show that close to 50 percent of all college and university presidents are 61 years of age or older. We can expect a generational change not only in campus leadership but in the faculty as well. Finally, income inequities are growing. The recent economic climate has treated some

individuals extremely well, while creating more difficult times for a growing proportion of the population.

*Growing public skepticism about higher education.* Amid these changes, higher education struggles to maintain its esteemed position as a relevant social institution. “The mythology of education as the great equalizer has faded,” said Dennison of Montana. “Education is the key to succeeding in America. That’s my family’s story,” he said. “But I’m not sure whether that is going to be so common a story going forward. I’m not sure whether there’s the same value. I’m not sure people value [highly] enough what education means.” A great deal of the skepticism has to do with a public perception that higher education simply is not responsive to contemporary societal needs. “I think we have to get very real with whether we are providing relevant knowledge, skills, and experiences for our students in higher education,” said Martha A. Smith, president of Anne Arundel Community College (MD). Colleges further lose public favor because of their seeming inability, or worse, unwillingness, to be accountable. Sizable, if not outright huge, endowments and billion-dollar capital campaigns do little to convince the public and policy makers that more public dollars are needed and that public policy has shortchanged higher education. Do taxpayers believe their money is being spent wisely, given the recent news articles on coaches’ salaries and conflict of interest in student loans?

Ironically, at the same time and through the lens of economic development, higher education is increasingly revered by policy makers and corporate leaders. A recent analysis of the state of the state addresses by the nation’s governors found that 76 percent of governors spoke of initiatives to foster partnerships that link the research capacities of colleges and universities with business needs, and close to 50 percent described initiatives to engage higher education more effectively in preparing their workforces to be globally competitive.<sup>1</sup> The result is that higher education is caught between two realities regarding its favored status; given the decline in relative public expenditures, disfavor seems to be winning.

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## Knowledge and Information

*Shifting foundations of knowledge.* Much of the traditional understanding of what constitutes knowledge and how it is validated and transmitted is being reshaped by changes in technology, particularly by web sites such as Wikipedia and Google, as well as by free open-source courseware. This shift surfaces assumptions about knowledge that have the potential to drastically reshape higher education. How is knowledge created and disseminated? Who verifies knowledge, particularly in the age of Wikipedia, “the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit” (according

<sup>1</sup> National Governors Association. (2007). *The governors speak—2007: A report on the state-of-the-state addresses of the nation’s and U.S. territories’ governors*. Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices. See [www.nga.org/Files/pdf/GOVSPEAK0704.PDF](http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/GOVSPEAK0704.PDF).



to its own web site)? What is the role of degrees and credentials, given trends in knowledge creation, ownership, and dissemination? What do virtual communities—Second Life, Facebook, and so forth—mean for the academic community, given the dynamic manner in which ideas are generated and shared in today’s global society? “The way knowledge is being created globally is collaborative and interdisciplinary,” said Winona State University (MN) President Judith A. Ramaley. “It’s co-created through networks and cyberspace.”

In many ways, colleges and universities have had a corner on knowledge and the ability to exploit it. But this historical reality may be changing, weakening the position of academe. Furthermore, while access is free and expanding, other forms of knowledge, particularly that generated by “big science,” is increasingly costly and governments are becoming disinclined to invest in it unless the payoff is immediate and concrete. These two trends, while pulling in opposite directions regarding the flow of knowledge, both have chilling effects for universities and colleges. Some types of understanding are widening; other avenues of knowledge are being foreclosed.

*Decline of civil society.* A deeper social change is creating a chill on many campuses that affects how students learn, what they learn, and possibly more importantly, how open they are to learning and new ideas. Discourse increasingly is thwarted by some individuals—students, faculty, alumni, and trustees, but also off-campus interest groups—who advocate narrow, extremist views with little willingness to solicit other viewpoints. Instead of engaging in open and constructive dialogue, they seek easy answers from a parochial viewpoint and are unwilling either to examine their assumptions or to do the hard work that generates deeper thought. At its extreme, this intolerance parallels other national and international movements around fundamentalism and extremism. Glotzbach of Skidmore College called it “the loss of rationality.” He said, “It is intrinsic in our [academic] nature to ask [difficult] questions, but our social context has come to expect extremely simple answers to those questions.” The rational discourse, essential to a liberal education, may be a way of the past. Asked Poskanzer of SUNY–New Paltz, “How do we retain the values of linear thought and arguments, so that students learn to engage in rational discourse, which traditionally is always at the center of the university consciousness? That is something in danger of being lost.”

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In such an environment, civil debate also suffers. People hold their positions and vie to see who can proclaim their points of view the loudest, rather than work toward better understanding. This creates a growing unwillingness to engage in constructive dialogue as individuals search for ways to skirt the hard choices rather than confront them. Said Drake’s Maxwell, “We no longer have role models in the public arena.”

A related casualty to this loss of discourse and the rise of sources such as Wikipedia and other networked sites is the value of science, according to some members of the roundtable. The practice of scientific discovery and objective inquiry is increasingly being countered by the emotionalism of opinions and beliefs. The volume of the arguments, not the proven facts, seems to be carrying the day. Anyone with an opinion on global warming can modify an online entry or post a paper regardless of his or her scientific training. Naysayers with a click of a mouse can “edit” years of scientific work to advocate their own untrained opinions.

*Losing ground to global competition.* Globalization puts two sets of pressures on institutions: to prepare students for a different future, and to be able as institutions to compete in an expanded market. Losing ground on the above areas also may mean that our country slips behind other nations in creating and supporting the infrastructure associated with the global knowledge age. As James Bernard Machen, president of the University of Florida, remarked about China’s escalating investment in higher education, “There are 200 million people learning to read English in China today, but they aren’t learning it so they can read Chaucer.” How well colleges and universities address these two pressures will influence the extent to which the nation remains economically competitive and colleges and universities remain socially relevant. The solutions to these challenges must be consistent with academic values and priorities, and in many instances be at least self-supporting.

First, institutions are being pressured to educate students for the global workplace. State governments, corporations, and, increasingly, parents of potential students are pressing colleges and universities to guarantee that graduates will find a high-paying job in the global knowledge economy. “When I think about global competition, one of the things that worries me is our ability to produce high-quality graduates who can compete with anyone in the world on a continuous basis,” said Jerry Sue Thornton, president of Cuyahoga Community College (OH).

Second, countries such as India, Korea, Germany, France, Australia, and China are investing deeply in their universities and advancing public policies that enable them to develop strong international presences. Students—including those from developed and developing countries—will shop a global market for educational opportunities. U.S. students may more readily look abroad for postsecondary education—particularly those in international fields—pitting American universities against one another as well as foreign institutions in a global competition for domestic and international students. Faculty members will be a part of this same global interchange. Worldwide competition also extends to research grants and corporate contracts, as multinational firms invest in R&D in different countries. Florida’s Machen said, “The global landscape is such

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that there are credible academic faculty at these [now] major universities. . . . The world has changed.”

A growing number of new ways to structure international partnerships and engagements exist to address both of these challenges. The trick will be to develop and maintain these new types of relationships. “Our joint collaboration with China is more of a business venture than a standard academic partnership,” said Simon, of Michigan State. “Our facility, which opened a year ago, really acts as more of a traffic cop for us on a wide range of activities,” not just academic initiatives. Such approaches also meet the dual objectives of advancing academic values and priorities and increasing institutional self-sufficiency.

*Concern for the environment.* Interest in and concern for the natural environment, socially, politically, and economically, is growing and higher education institutions are finding themselves swept up by this trend for several reasons. First, campus scientists are at the forefront of research on the environment. Second, students are right behind them, as advocates for a more environmentally conscious society. And third, faculty members and students on campus are pushing colleges to be among the first institutions to embrace greener processes and technologies, whether in the consumption of energy or the construction of environmentally friendly facilities.

## The Unpredictable Unknowns

All these trends touch on the social, cultural, technological, and economic forces that are currently pressing on colleges and universities. However, there is another part of the conversation about the future that is difficult, if not impossible, to address. These are unknown or newly emerging issues that will profoundly affect higher education in the near future. Some of the important challenges for the future are less visible now than others. Before 2001, who would have predicted that issues of homeland security would become such a dominant national policy priority? No one was concerned about Wikipedia and user-driven knowledge (or the “democratization of knowledge”) when they were still relying on peer-reviewed journals and even the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Until recently, academics were concerned with the *demise* of community as students spent more time on e-mail and the web, not with issues of privacy and other fallout from community networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Much about the future remains unknown and unpredictable.

# Laying the Groundwork for the Future

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Leading for the future requires three capacities. First, college and university leaders must have a clear sense of what they want their institutions to be and do. Creating their visions comes through a deep understanding of the mission of the institution and the ability to work with key stakeholders to design a mosaic of what the institution can become. Second, leaders must discern the problems and opportunities ahead. Knowing the forthcoming terrain helps prepare one for the journey. The ideas presented in the previous section serve as a useful, if incomplete, starting point. Finally, leaders must lay the groundwork now to position their institutions to realize their vision, given the emerging future.

While none of these requirements is easy to fulfill, the third charge may prove most difficult. Leaders must simultaneously live in the present with all its demands and do the work for tomorrow, which may seem like a distraction or even an imprudent use of time and resources, given immediate pressures. Laying this groundwork for the future may have few short-term gains, and may even be costly. For instance, convincing one's faculty and students during times of financial duress to invest for the distant future rather than spending on today's needs can be one of the most challenging tasks for a leader. Yet, making that argument successfully is essential to effective leadership. This section focuses on this third challenge, providing some concrete steps for institutional leaders to secure their institution's future.

## People

*Attend to those historically left behind.* A casualty of the changing financial calculus may easily be low-income students. As state policy moves toward market structures and public support fails to keep pace, and as institutions ratchet-up merit aid, students from low-income backgrounds may suffer disproportionately. The country cannot afford to turn its back on those students. Competing in the global marketplace will require maximizing all the human talent the nation has to offer. "I'm very concerned that we get to all citizens of this country because we are going to need every single one of them if we're going to achieve the goal of being competitive in the world," said Smith of Anne Arundel Community College.

Much of the challenge is grounded not only in holding costs down and providing adequate need-based aid, but in addressing prior schooling. In order to achieve this, higher education will have to join forces with elementary and high school educators more deliberately than in the past.

“We’ve got to get our hands dirty with K–12 and try to get those kids who are not considering going to college,” said Kentucky’s Todd.

*Develop talent for tomorrow.* An essential component of higher education’s future and its ability to change successfully is effective leadership. “We have a challenge to build a cadre of leaders who can identify and react to what today we’re calling the unexpected,” said Linda M. Thor, president of Rio Salado Community College (AZ). “We must prepare leaders who will be more in tune with the trends and are able to act on them proactively.” This challenge becomes even more pressing as the latest ACE data show that almost half of today’s presidents are aged 61 or older; they will retire in the near- to midterm. Many key attributes of successful leaders will remain the same, such as the importance of academic credentials and experience in higher education, the ability to articulate and embody academic values, the capacity to articulate and develop a vision, the skills to get things done by building committed communities and securing necessary resources, and a deep passion for higher education. Yet this new generation of leaders may require new characteristics as well. For instance, future leaders will need an ability to more effectively engage external audiences as partners, as discussed above, to advance the institution’s mission (in ways beyond raising money), and generally to advocate on the institution’s behalf. The leader of the future will need to identify strategically and then secure a wider array of resources to support the institution.

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Leaders also will need to effect different types of change continually. They must recognize that different times will require different leadership and then be able to adapt. They must be able to strike balances between competing priorities and stakeholders without having either side feel shortchanged. The job of the president, ultimately, may be about framing problems and engaging people to develop solutions.

The future success of colleges and universities does not rest solely with administrative leaders, however. Engaged faculty members also will be essential. On many campuses, a new spirit of responsibility is emerging among talented young professors. Presidents notice that these new academics are more engaged, concerned about the effectiveness of their work, and interested in socially relevant questions or applications of their work than faculty from previous generations. They are unwilling to sit on the sidelines or hide in their classrooms and labs, and are strongly committed to positioning their institutions for the future. Others are concerned that this sense of self-determination offered by a new generation of faculty ultimately will succumb to characteristics shared more generally by other young people in their age group, who have a loose sense of connection to institutions and are less inclined to feel a sense of personal obligation for institutional direction and stability. Said Maxwell of Drake University, “I fear that may have a negative impact on faculty fulfilling their responsibilities for shared governance, for taking ownership of the institution’s future in the ways that their predecessors have.”

## Purposes

*Resolve tensions in what and how we teach.* The type of learning needed to prepare students for the future is placed at risk if higher education cannot address some fundamental tensions in its curricula. First, the tension between the liberal arts and professional education will need to be resolved so institutions can best prepare students for a future that demands both intellectual and practical skills. “If you talk to the corporate leaders, they’ll tell you a liberal education is needed to get ahead. Yet, if you talk to the human resources people [who do the hiring], they’ll tell you [they] want somebody who has practical skills,” said Montana’s Dennison. “Yet liberal educators don’t want to talk about careerism, and vocationalists don’t want to talk about liberalism. That will have to change.” The uneasy truce between academic tribes that currently allows this to occur (e.g., typical distributed general education curricula) may not be sufficient in the future. Instead, campuses will need to find constructive ways to provide both types of education in an intentional and integrated manner.

Second, teaching will need to become even more collaborative and more cross- and interdisciplinary. This starts, of course, with the faculty. Graduates in many areas already are expected by their employers to move beyond a single academic discipline to solve problems from an interdisciplinary perspective as part of a team, real or virtual. “Interdisciplinarity is one issue that, if you look at the next 10 or 20 years, will take more of a center place,” said SUNY–New Paltz’s Poskanzer. “The capacity to have students working across fields will require universities to at least make spaces for that” process to occur. Interdisciplinary learning will also take place outside the traditional classroom. Linking different fields and disciplines will be important, but so will be the ability to link learning from different experiences. Putting ideas into practice and having opportunities to make those connections under the tutelage of skilled experts helps deepen learning.

Finally, the burden will increasingly fall to higher education to teach the values and practices of deliberative democracy. The presidents expressed deep concern not only that people seem to be less inclined to take on the responsibilities of citizenship, but that there exist virtually no arenas in which such practices can be learned. Colleges and universities will need to devise an “education for civic engagement,” said Lawrence S. Bacow, president of Tufts University.

*Adopt a truly global orientation.* What has been accomplished thus far regarding U.S. higher education’s interaction with the rest of the world is most likely but the tip of what is to come. U.S. higher education has a strong track record in educating international graduate students and recruiting foreign-born academics, and a consistent record in sending students overseas for short programs (albeit one that has not seen steep growth). Many institutions also are making concerted efforts to expose their students on campus to international ideas and issues. However, American colleges and universities will need to make significant progress in sending more students overseas for both short and long stays. A handful of institutions are making commitments

and developing the means to do this, but for the vast majority, study abroad is not becoming significantly more prevalent. Colleges and universities will need to incorporate international ideas and perspectives fully into the curriculum. Students, regardless of career choice or discipline, will need to acquire an understanding of the world beyond the nation's borders and develop the capacity to learn from and about different cultures. International dimensions can no longer be an “add on” or an option that students can select—or not.

Beyond educating their own students, and as noted previously, American campuses will need to prepare themselves for the growing international higher education marketplace. They will find increased competition with international universities for international students, non-U.S. born faculty, and research dollars. At the same time, their offerings and degrees may be in higher demand, thus they will need to develop capacities, online and face-to-face, to work in other countries, understanding the needs of the local community, the regional higher education system, and pertinent quality assurance mechanisms.

Finally, campus leaders may have to convince the public that international education is beneficial, as some Americans may not share that same sentiment. Said Thornton of Cuyahoga Community College, “At colleges and universities, we clearly understand the need to compete. We clearly understand the need to globalize our education and international education, but I’m

not sure [that] in our broader American population there is as much support for that as we feel in higher education. There is an America that has a huge pushback to it.” Of particular concern are those who feel their jobs and livelihoods are threatened by global outsourcing.

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*Serve as stewards of place.* As institutions adopt a global view, they must simultaneously attend to the needs of their local communities. Colleges and universities, regardless of mission, rely on their local communities and, in turn, have a responsibility to address certain local needs. The work of institutions can go a long way in raising the stature of their localities (whether defined as city, state, neighborhood, or region) and improving the lives of area citizens. Noted Winona State’s Ramaley, “Most of us are important engines for change and critical place keepers.” The work can be grouped into two large categories of issues, which are more likely to overlap than to be separate and distinct. On the one hand, institutions are relied on to address pressing social issues such as K–12 education, aging, health care, or poverty. The other set of issues—related to regional economic development, including workforce development, new business incubation, innovation, and competitiveness—is increasingly finding itself front and center on institutional agendas, as policy makers and corporate leaders recognize higher education to be a key driver and resource in the growing knowledge economy.

*Articulate higher education's social purpose.* Finally, higher education can best do well by doing good. Leaders, in the midst of budgets, entrepreneurial activities, curricular decisions, and strategic plans, can best be served by reinforcing and stressing higher education's social purpose. "I think the thing we will always bear in mind is that we are valuable to society and valuable to industry, in particular *because* we are different," said Bacow of Tufts University. Reaffirming the values and the means that make higher education a special contributor to society helps elevate the work of institutions and their leaders above the fray of simply management and accountability. Given the pressures, it is too easy to become distracted or intentionally downplay those key contributions and the special roles played by colleges and universities. Without a deliberate strategy to remind key stakeholders beyond the campus that higher education is a unique and essential social institution, we risk being viewed in simple terms, and in effect, as much less than we actually are.

## Practices

*Question assumptions.* How higher education collectively advances itself depends on what we choose to do, how we are structured, and where we set our priorities. But it also depends on the assumptions we hold that shape our future actions. Said Maxwell of Drake University, "Our operating behavior as institutions and organizations is based on a set of assumptions—assumptions about the world, assumptions about who we are, assumptions about what we do. Ultimately, the biggest challenge for us is determining which of the assumptions we are making right now are still going to be valid and operative in 20 years." What are those assumptions that will serve us well, and which ones may need to be jettisoned? How do we create solutions for future problems, some of which are only now beginning to come into clarity?

*Perfect collaboration.* Higher education in the future may well need more voices, not fewer, in shaping its direction, and may rely increasingly on a broader array of institutional and other partners. Said Bacow, "The boundaries that traditionally have defined organizations have become much more permeable. And we're struggling in some ways with how to deal with these more permeable membranes." The ability to collaborate effectively will play itself out in numerous arenas.

First, governing campuses in the future will be a much more open and collaborative process. As the demands on institutions grow, so will the number of stakeholders involved with a serious and sustained commitment to institutional success. Said Maxwell, "There are shifts in ownership in the future of the institution. . . . There are a lot of people who really do have a stake in the future of the institution, from students and their parents, to faculty, the governing board, the alumni. We've had a very successful and reasonably static model of governance for the last half century. It has served us well. But I think we are seeing shifts in how the parts of that formula understand and place their [own] role, particularly the public sector."



Second, institutional leaders will need to know how to work collaboratively within their institutions to identify and tap leadership in others as the issues become more complex and the stakes become higher. Said Skidmore's Glotzbach, "I think there is one thing that's very clear: People who are in leadership positions are going to rely upon a skill that has not been traditionally honored in the leadership of higher education and that is relationship building—the capacity to negotiate, the capacity to network with a broad range of leaders."

Third, campus leaders will have to manage relationships with other organizations, including other colleges and universities, but also community organizations, government agencies, and businesses. Said Dennison: "Our relationships with other institutions will also have to become more fluid so that we can respond to a societal need or so we can bring together the right compilation of sources to tackle the obstacle. We're going to have to have new types of networks and ties to these different types of factors. Otherwise, we will really start to seem irrelevant."

Creating new partnerships and organizational structures can range from tedious to frustrating to gut-wrenchingly difficult. But more and more examples are emerging of colleges and universities finding new ways to collectively deliver education, produce scholarship, and improve society. Dennison spoke about his efforts in Montana to encourage collaboration among public higher education institutions. The effort included building new facilities, integrating staff and administrative infrastructure, and developing new curricula. Additionally, colleges and universities have to continue working to resolve the awkwardness of building beneficial partnerships with the private sector. "We've broken the interface between the academy and business," Bacow said, "which is much more challenging and interesting today than it was in the past."

*Develop the capacity for continual innovation.* Resolving the problems facing institutions will require hard work by leaders and their institutions. Increasing affordability and containing costs, making scarce dollars go further toward advancing institutional priorities, addressing regional and economic development demands and interests by policy makers, developing more effective pedagogies and assessment processes, adapting effectively to changing student (and faculty) demographics, and responding to anticipated and unanticipated social and epistemic trends will all require sustained innovation. As Michigan State's Simon said, "The pressure on all of us is to continue to change very rapidly." Her solution was to create institutional capacity for what she called "serial innovation" or the ability to innovate continuously throughout the institution in a range of areas, not one particular area, such as technology transfer, teaching writing to undergraduates, or internationalizing the student experience. Innovation also is required in multiple dimensions of teaching and learning, as well as in administrative areas that increase efficiency and effectiveness, and finally, in the ways that institutions fulfill their public purposes, including economic development, workforce development, and research and

scholarship. Developing this capacity campus-wide will require systems and processes that encourage, foster, and support innovation throughout the institution. In some instances, implementing these efforts will require important yet minor change. However, for other institutions, such change will require a shift in culture.

Part of developing the capacity to innovate is to continually develop new streams of revenue. Given trends in public funding and growing costs, higher education may best be served by developing the ability to support itself. While long the *modus operandi* of independent institutions, the scope and scale of self-support predicted by the public institution presidents is unprecedented.

*Look beyond higher education.* Leaders can try to prepare for an unknown future by looking in atypical places. Higher education historically struggles to move beyond the “it-wasn’t-invented-here syndrome.” Unlikely sources of insight are often looked down upon by higher education because we (or they) are different. However, because they are different, they offer new perspectives that can reveal much. Several sources of new approaches to emerging trends include:

- **Our youth.** For better *and* worse, the young are redefining our future. Nowhere is this more evident than in their use of technology to facilitate social networks and information sharing. In essence, they are defining what Ramaley of Winona State University called the “co-creation of knowledge.” Such shared and user-driven efforts may be the foundation for how knowledge will be transmitted, if not developed, in the future.
- **Other countries.** As other nations develop and seek to enhance their own systems of higher education, they are adapting to the global marketplace in many ways more rapidly than U.S. colleges and universities. Roundtable participants often mentioned China. “Currently, [the Chinese] are looking to replicate our system, but they are pouring so many resources into it. Then they are going to innovate and move beyond us,” worried Machen of the University of Florida. Other nations are investing more heavily in their higher education institutions and creating favorable public policies that encourage their development, and giving those institutions the freedom to innovate as they realize that higher education is essential to the knowledge economy.
- **The private sector.** Although critics often lament that universities have lost their way and are trying to become “more like businesses,” in some ways corporate America may be better poised than higher education to address some of the demands of the changing world. Corporations intentionally invest in R&D to improve their products, their management, and their production processes. They more readily create partnerships, even with their own competitors. And they invest in developing the leadership abilities of their people. Campus leaders may do well to take notice. Said Maxwell of Drake University about systematically looking at corporate processes: “It reinforces how unusual we are in how we organize our-

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Leaders can try to prepare for an unknown future by looking in atypical places. Higher education historically struggles to move beyond the “it-wasn’t-invented-here syndrome.”

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selves, how we manage ourselves, and how long we've been doing things the same way. Given the success that other sectors are having in managing themselves differently, I suspect we're going to need to continue to take a hard look at the way we do things.”

## Conclusion:

# Three Deceptive, Simple Questions

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The reality is that the clarity of crystal balls is poor. Conversations about the future inevitably result in more questions than answers. Try as we might, foresight is fleeting. A conversation such as the one captured in this essay broached many questions; participants tackled some of them but avoided others. Their complexity varied, as did their relevance. However, the conversation circled back repeatedly to three fundamental questions. On their surface, as one participant commented, they are “deceptive yet simple.” Yet, given the challenges of peering into the future and making changes now to best prepare for that future, no quick answers exist.

- Who are we going to teach and serve?
- What are we going to teach and study, and what methods will work best?
- How are we going to pay for it?

Although basic, these questions cannot be answered simply, not by presidents in conversations with their peers, not through a campus’s one-time board retreat, and not solely through the next strategic plan. However, it is imperative to answer these deceptive, simple questions, and each campus must find its own means to address them. The work of leaders is to develop processes that continually put these questions in front of key stakeholders and collectively progress toward answers. The challenge is that by the time they are answered, the future has changed, adding new opportunities and different constraints that require institutions to go through the process of asking and answering once again.



# Appendix: Participants at the April 2007 ACE Presidential Roundtable

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## **Key Trends and Their Implications for Year 2027: A Presidential Conversation to Develop Collective Foresight**

The individuals listed below participated in the April 2007 ACE Presidential Roundtable held in Washington, DC. Their titles and affiliations reflect those at the time of the discussion.

Lawrence S. Bacow  
President  
Tufts University (MA)

Steven G. Poskanzer  
President  
State University of New York at New Paltz

Stephen M. Curtis  
President  
Community College of Philadelphia (PA)

Judith A. Ramaley  
President  
Winona State University (MN)

George M. Dennison  
President  
University of Montana

Lou Anna K. Simon  
President  
Michigan State University

Philip A. Glotzbach  
President  
Skidmore College (NY)

Martha A. Smith  
President  
Anne Arundel Community College (MD)

James Bernard Machen  
President  
University of Florida

Linda M. Thor  
President  
Rio Salado Community College (AZ)

David Maxwell  
President  
Drake University (IA)

Jerry Sue Thornton  
President  
Cuyahoga Community College (OH)

Lee T. Todd, Jr.  
President  
University of Kentucky

Bette A. Landman (Facilitator)  
President Emerita  
Arcadia University (PA)

David Ward  
President  
American Council on Education

James Renick  
Senior Vice President  
Division of Programs & Research  
American Council on Education

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Ellen R. Babby  
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American Council on Education

Marlene Ross  
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Center for Effective Leadership  
American Council on Education

Madeleine B. d'Ambrosio  
Vice President and Executive Director  
TIAA-CREF Institute

Claire Van Ummersen  
Vice President  
Center for Effective Leadership  
American Council on Education

Peter D. Eckel  
Director, Programs and Initiatives  
Center for Effective Leadership  
American Council on Education

Jeanie Watson  
Consultant

Terry W. Hartle  
Senior Vice President  
Division of Government & Public Affairs  
American Council on Education

Byron P. White (Scribe)  
Associate Vice President  
Community Engagement  
Xavier University (OH)

Jacqueline King  
Director  
Center for Policy Analysis  
American Council on Education







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EDUCATION TRUST HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTICE GUIDE

# Learning From High-Performing and Fast-Gaining Institutions



The Education Trust

## Top 10 Analyses to Provoke Discussion and Action on College Completion

# Learning From High-Performing and Fast-Gaining Institutions

BY JOSEPH YEADO, KATI HAYCOCK, ROB JOHNSTONE, AND PRIYADARSHINI CHAPLOT

## INTRODUCTION

With growing concern for postsecondary degree attainment sweeping public discourse in state and national circles, the traditional emphasis on access and enrollment headcounts is expanding to include a keen interest in student progress and completion.

In many cases, though, conversations among policy experts are well ahead of conversations on college campuses. Too often, many still think it is enough to provide opportunity to students: What they do with that opportunity is up to them.

Institutions that don't make the shift — from focusing on access alone to focusing on access and success — aren't likely to fare well in the new environment of performance-based funding and increasingly hard-edged accountability. More important, neither will their students. In this economy, "some college" won't get young adults very far; we need to help more of them get the degrees that will.

Fortunately, campus leaders who are struggling with how to get their faculties and staffs to make this transition don't have to make up the playbook for themselves. Around the country, there are colleges and universities that have already made the shift and have the improved outcomes data to validate it. In every case, these institutions have improved results markedly over a sustained period of time; almost all are graduating more of their students — especially students of color and, where we have the data, low-income students — than peer institutions throughout the country.

For this guide, we've examined practices at eight such institutions:

**Florida State University**, a 31,000-student university that increased graduation rates for freshmen Pell Grant recipients from 61 percent in 2005 to 72 percent in 2012, nearly the same rate as non-Pell students

**Georgia State University**, a diverse, urban institution where underrepresented minority students graduate at a higher rate than their white peers

**San Diego State University**, where graduation rates for Latino students — a quarter of all undergraduates — nearly doubled from 31.4 percent in 2002 to 58.8 percent in 2011 (Table 1)

**University of North Carolina at Greensboro**, a 15,000-student public university that has eliminated the graduation rate gap between black and white students

**University of Southern California**, a private, nonprofit university that increased graduation rates for Latino students 19 points to nearly the same rate as its white students

**University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire**, where graduation rates for freshmen Pell Grant recipients increased from 49 percent in 2005 to 60 percent in 2010

**Virginia Commonwealth University**, which increased the graduation rate for black students 13 points to roughly the same rates as its white students

**University of Alabama**, where course redesign efforts dramatically improved pass rates in gateway mathematics courses

While each institution took a somewhat different path on its journey toward improving student retention and success, there are common elements that cut across them all. Among the most important is the role of campus leadership — including the president but especially the provost — in helping to make student success a high, institution-wide priority. But close behind that is the early and ongoing use of data in critical tasks along the way, from the initial effort to galvanize a sense of urgency about the problem of student attrition to ongoing efforts to design and test interventions.

In almost every case, these institutions now have very sophisticated student success data management systems that facilitate ongoing inquiry and literally automate much of the work, including detailed monitoring of student progress with immediate alerts to both students and their advisers when key milestones are missed. But none of them started out that way. Instead, what they typically had was a self-described "data geek" in a key leadership role whose own curiosity about what the data might say about various aspects of student success started the ball rolling.

**Table 1: Student Success Gains at San Diego State University Under President Weber**

Student Group	Six-Year Graduation Rate of Students Who Began in 1996	Six-Year Graduation Rate of Students Who Began in 2005	Percent Change Over Time
Overall	38.1%	65.6%	+ 72.2%
Black	28.6%	55.8%	+ 95.1%
Latino	31.4%	58.8%	+ 87.3%
White	42.4%	68.6%	+ 61.8%

And lest we scare anyone away, we want to be clear: Two of our favorite data geek provosts over the years were former professors of English literature and cultural anthropology,

respectively. The initial work doesn't take great data prowess; indeed the complexity that can result from such prowess often gets in the way in the initial stages. What is needed, it turns out, are simple but compelling analyses that dramatize the problem and invite broad-based problem-solving, especially among faculty. For example, when former San Diego State University President Steve Weber joined the campus in 1996, he used shared governance to drive the campus forward. A close observer of the push to make completion by Latino students an institution-wide priority described the efforts this way: "You have to appreciate faculty, love what they do and, in that sense, really value their opinions and perspectives because they are the ones who will make these changes."

To save leaders at other campuses from having to invent an initial set of analyses for themselves, we're sharing 10 of the analyses that leaders at these eight institutions (and others) found to be particularly powerful in galvanizing attention and action. Some won't be appropriate to your institution; just pass them by. Hopefully, there will be a few here that you can use and others that will inspire important questions relevant to your own institution.

For each analysis, we provide its inspiration, process, and insights. Where possible, we identify subsequent interventions made in response to insights arising from relevant analyses and provide information on the effectiveness of these interventions. Bear in mind, however, that improvements in retention and graduation rates are usually a result of multiple, simultaneous efforts, rather than just one or two.

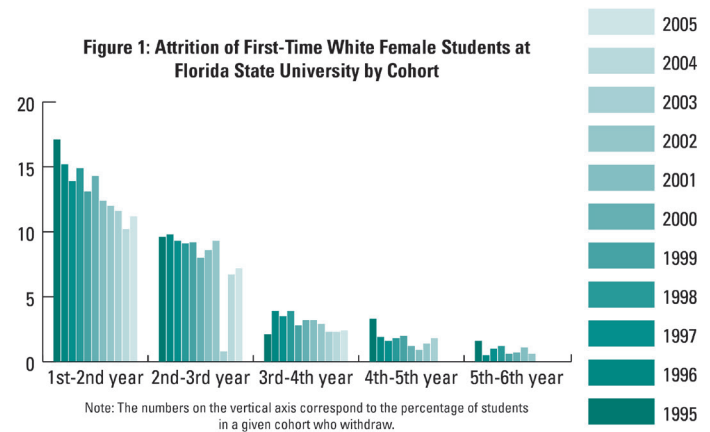
## ANALYSIS 1

### HOW MANY STUDENTS DO WE LOSE ALONG THE WAY? A LOOK AT YEAR-TO-YEAR RETENTION RATES

Most institutions produce reports on the number of first-year students who don't return the following fall. Because the fall-off between the first and second year tends to be largest, these analyses often prompt the movement of resources and activity toward what seems to be that "all-important" freshman year. But, what happens after the first year? What do the retention rates look like in subsequent years? Yes, at most universities, fall-offs are largest between year one and year two. But, if you add the students who fall off in subsequent years, that figure often totals — or exceeds — that first-to-second-year loss.

It is also important to look beneath the averages and ask, "Are leaving patterns different for different groups of students?"

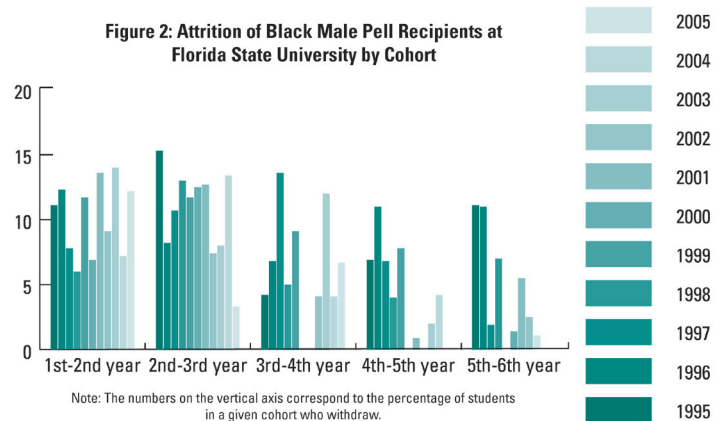
The experience at Florida State University (FSU) shows the benefits of looking further into the data. Like most universities, FSU had focused a lot of energy on retaining freshmen. However, when campus leaders took a more comprehensive look at the freshmen cohorts entering from 1995-2005 (Figure 1), they learned that they had missed something important. Yes, as expected, the highest attrition occurred between the first and second years for all groups (white female Pell recipients, Latino male non-Pell, etc). And most groups had especially small attrition rates after the third year. That is, all except for one. For African American male Pell recipients (Figure



2), retention rates were a consistent issue every year, not just between the first and second year of attendance.

Leaders at FSU responded by creating the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE) in 2000, which centralized the coordination of a number of previously disconnected departments, including transition, engagement, and academic support services, to assist traditionally underrepresented and disadvantaged populations. All students accepted into the summer bridge program are first-generation college students and Pell-eligible, including many African American students. Using such efforts as mandatory second-year success coaches in addition to the more common first-year efforts, FSU has been able to focus its efforts on student groups who were at a higher risk of not progressing.

Even if your institution doesn't have a group of students with unusual retention patterns, disaggregating retention data by student group and tracking each group over four to six years can illustrate the toll that attrition takes. Displaying the data in chart form, like the examples here, is a way to invite interest and action from faculty and staff (Tables 2 and 3).



Joseph Yeado is higher education research and policy analyst, and Kati Haycock is president at The Education Trust. Rob Johnstone and Priyadarshini Chaplot are from the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement. © Copyright 2013 The Education Trust. All rights reserved.

You should do a similar analysis with transfer students. Yes, we know that many institutional leaders (especially those from the two-year colleges sending students on to four-year institutions) say things like “Transfer students are as or more successful in obtaining degrees as those who start as freshmen.”

But are they? As the analysis below from one institution’s data shows, transfer students have a success rate of 61 percent, which is 3 percentage points lower than the rate for first-time freshmen at that same institution (Table 4).

Transfer students, however, are not freshmen. Many have been in college for at least two or three years, have accumulated at least 60 credits, and have junior status. Thus, a more telling analysis would compare transfer students with freshmen students retained to junior status. Here, we see that attrition rates for transfer students are considerably higher. Transfer success is clearly something this college needs to work on, not just freshman retention.

## ANALYSIS 2

### *BUT ARE THOSE RETURNING STUDENTS ACTUALLY SOPHOMORES?*

#### *TRACKING THE RATE OF SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS WHO ACHIEVE SOPHOMORE STANDING*

At many universities, even very high first-to-second-year retention rates don’t necessarily lead to high completion rates. Why? Because many of the students who return don’t complete anywhere close to the credits they need to be on track to complete their degrees. And, over time, as they fall further and further behind, they can easily just disengage from their studies.

That’s what leaders at Georgia State University found when they tried to understand why overall retention rates resting consistently between 80 percent and 83 percent still weren’t resulting in comparable graduation rates. If students were staying in college, why weren’t they graduating?

Here’s what they found: Although 80 percent of freshmen in 2000 returned for the 2001 academic year, only 22 percent were earning enough credits to achieve sophomore standing by the beginning of that second year (see Figure 3). Indeed, average freshmen credit hours hovered around 10 per semester — far from the 15 credit hours per semester that research at other universities had suggested was a key milestone for eventual completion.

When they dug further into the data, it turned out that there were many contributing issues. Many students were getting D’s, W’s, and F’s in critical courses. Low-income students were reducing their credit hours in an effort to keep their semesters more affordable.

How did Georgia State respond? Working together, administrators and faculty:

- Organized freshmen learning communities that now serve 70 percent of first-year students and are specifically designed to help students earn 16 units by the end of the first term.

**Table 2**

For Every	Returned Year Two	Returned Year Three	Returned or Graduated Year Four	Returned or Graduated Year Five	Returned or Graduated Year Six
100 White Freshmen	80	74	72	70	65
100 Latino Freshmen	75	70	65	63	59
100 Black Freshmen	72	70	62	59	52

**Table 3**

Number of Freshmen in Fall 2008 Cohort	Number Who Earned a Degree in 6 Years	Number Without a Degree After 6 Years	Number Who Would Have Earned a Degree if Group Had Same Success Rate as Whites
White: 1,638	1,017	621	n/a
Black: 414	165	249	257
American Indian: 24	9	15	15
Latino: 393	200	193	244

**Table 4: Graduation Rates for First-Time Freshmen and Transfer Bachelor’s Degree-Seeking Students in 2006/12 Cohort**

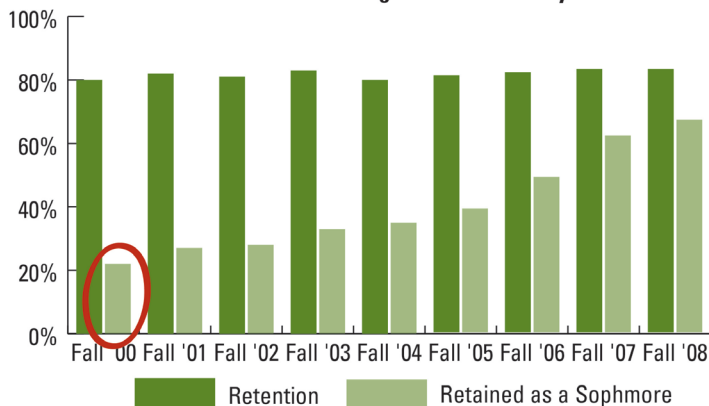
Students	Cohort (#)	Six-Year Graduation Rate
Freshmen	1,357	64%
Transfer	444	61%

**Comparison of Graduation Rates of Third-Year Students and New Transfer Students in 2006/12 Cohort**

Students	Number Who Graduated in Six Years	Percent of Students With a Degree in Six Years
Third-Year Students	977	89%
Transfers	444	61%



**Figure 3: First-Year Retention and Progression Rates at Georgia State University**



- Redesigned key courses, utilizing hybrid instructional models and supplemental instruction. For example, by converting all 7,500 annual seats in college algebra into a hybrid model, blending an hour of lecture with two hours of group time in a computer lab open and staffed 24/7, the university was able to lower the rate of D's, W's, and F's from 43 percent to 21 percent.
- Established a post-freshman year Summer Success Academy for the 200 or so weakest first-year students, offering them an opportunity to earn another seven credits.

Through these and other targeted efforts, Georgia State has tripled the proportion of its returning students attaining sophomore standing, from 22 percent in 2000 to 67 percent in 2008. Meanwhile, graduation rates have increased from 41 percent in 2006 (students who began in 2000) to 47 percent in 2011 (students who began in 2005).

## ANALYSIS 3

### WHY AREN'T OUR STUDENTS ACCUMULATING THE CREDITS THEY NEED TO BE ON TRACK? ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF COURSE WITHDRAWALS

In digging deeply into their data, teams at many universities find — as did Georgia State — that some students don't even attempt the 15 credit hours per semester that it takes to be on track to a degree. There are many possible contributors here, including per-unit pricing policies and well-meaning counselors who, despite research to the contrary, believe that students with weaker entering skills are better off taking less than a full load.

But it often turns out that course withdrawals are a big contributor. When leaders at Virginia Commonwealth University analyzed their data to better understand who took four years, five years, or six years to graduate, they saw a pattern in the course withdrawal numbers. On average, on-time graduates had withdrawn from one course or less over the duration of their collegiate careers. Students who graduated in five years had, on average, withdrawn from four courses, while

those who graduated in six years had withdrawn from roughly eight courses (Table 5).

And there were interesting differences among different groups of students. For example, international students were attempting as many as 180 units and earning about 135, withdrawing from almost 50 units during their academic careers. In contrast, in-state students graduating in six years were attempting an average of 145 and earning an average of 135 units. In both cases, students only need 120 units for a degree. Yet, they were taking — and paying for — an extra semester's worth of credits or more. (Later in this guide, we discuss how to get students to a degree without excess credits.)

Evolving over a series of decades, the university's withdrawal policy enabled students to drop a course late in the semester. Whether students withdrew because the course was too difficult or because they wanted only an A in the course, withdrawing from courses was shown to dramatically extend college careers, if not postpone completion indefinitely. Furthermore, the last day to add courses came before the last day to withdraw from courses, erasing the opportunity for some students to take the seats made available by those who dropped the courses. These new insights prompted university officials to review the very liberal withdrawal policy, specifically its impact, both positive and negative, on students.

**Table 5: Time to Graduation and Course Withdrawals at Virginia Commonwealth**

Number of Years Taken to Graduate	Course Withdrawals (on average)
4	0-1
5	4
6	8

## ANALYSIS 4

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER REASONS OUR STUDENTS AREN'T ACCUMULATING THE CREDITS THEY NEED?

#### ANALYZING SUCCESS RATES IN THE 25-35 COURSES WITH THE LARGEST ANNUAL ENROLLMENT

While most colleges and universities offer more than 1,000 — or even 2,000 — courses, research by Carol Twigg and others at the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) has shown that the 25-35 courses with the largest total enrollment often account for about a third of all enrollments in any academic year — and an even larger fraction of course failures.<sup>1</sup> Generally, these are introductory or developmental courses taught each year by multiple faculty members, typically without much coordination. But, as NCAT has also shown, campuses that take on the redesign of those courses with student success in mind can achieve marked improvements, while also often lowering the cost of instruction.<sup>2</sup>

But it is hard to generate energy for course redesign without a wake-up call.

Fortunately, the data necessary for that wake-up call are generally readily available in most institutional record systems or research offices.

The core idea is simple. Identify the 25-35 courses with the largest annual enrollments. List the D, F, and withdrawal rates for each; summarize with overall “course success” rates. Look at the data for all students, then also analyze separately for underrepresented minorities and all other students. This will help you to know where to target your efforts to have the maximum impact on closing your success gaps.

Before the University of Alabama got into an aggressive course redesign effort, its D, F, and W rates were pretty typical. Yet when those rates were shared with faculty, most were shocked. Campus leaders decided to start by redesigning the first credit-bearing mathematics course, college algebra, where data revealed more than half of the students failed. Their success led, over time, to serious redesign in many of the university’s largest courses — and to serious improvements in student success, especially for underrepresented minority students (Table 6).

## ANALYSIS 5

### WHO’S STRUGGLING WITH MATH: ONLY DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS? ANALYZING SUCCESS RATES IN THE FIRST CREDIT-BEARING MATH COURSE

A few years ago, The Education Trust convened a group of university system heads around the topic of student success in mathematics. Instead of asking leaders to come equipped with the numbers they were used to reciting — the low success rates in their developmental math courses — we asked them to bring along success data for their first credit-bearing courses. In other words, the students who had shown, generally through some combination of grades, course taking, and test results, that they were ready for college-level math.

When we asked them to share the data with others in the room, there was a long, uncomfortable silence. Then one system leader spoke up: “I don’t know whether to be more embarrassed by the numbers” — in his system, pass rates for college algebra hovered around 45 percent — “or by the fact that I never even thought to ask for them.” Others said much the same thing. Though success rates for the different systems, not to mention the campuses within them, varied from lows in the 30s to highs in the 60s, no system head had previously had even a clue that success rates in this critical course were so miserably low.

So, before you start digging further into success rates in developmental courses, we suggest you start where the system heads started that day: by examining success rates in the first college-level mathematics course offered by your institution.

Table 7 shows what leaders at other institutions found when they looked at their data prior to beginning course redesign

work with NCAT. However, we suggest that you dig further and look underneath the averages to note any significant differences by race, gender, or Pell status.

The good news here is that universities that take this problem head on, substantially redesigning those initial mathematics courses, can bring about significant changes in these patterns very quickly. The University of Alabama is one such example.

**Table 6: Success Rates in the First Three Mathematics Courses at the University of Alabama Over Time**

	Math 005	Math 100	Math 110
Fall 2005	64.2%	67.2%	66%
Fall 2006	73.6%	73.8%	70.3%
Fall 2007	74%	75.2%	74.8%
Fall 2008	67.8%	78.1%	65.5%
Fall 2009	67.2%	70.5%	77.7%
Fall 2010	64%	72.2%	73.3%
Fall 2011	66.7%	65.3%	72.7%
Fall 2012	84.6%	65.1%	80.1%

University administrators were inspired by the potential of the “Math Emporium” model piloted at Virginia Tech, though there was resistance from faculty members. That resistance began to subside after a faculty delegation visited Virginia Tech to witness the program in action. Within a year, Alabama had hired Virginia Tech’s math department chair, Robert Olin, to be the new dean of arts and sciences and to lead the course redesign work.

Similar to the redesign efforts at Georgia State, the University of Alabama replaced traditional classroom instruction with blended learning in a computer lab. Using common textbooks, exams, and quizzes, course redesign allowed students to get help immediately when they encountered obstacles, instead of waiting for faculty office hours the following week. This enabled instructors to focus their time and energy on individual assistance. Taken together, these efforts represent a

**Table 7: Drop-Failure-Withdrawal Rates for Mathematics, 2000**

Georgia State University	45%
Louisiana State University	36%
Rio Salado Community College	41%
University of Alabama	60%
University of Missouri–St. Louis	50%
UNC–Greensboro	77%
UNC–Chapel Hill	19%
Wayne State University	61%

marked departure from the math courses traditionally offered at the University of Alabama.

While the results did not shift overnight, they moved up pretty fast. Today, success rates in the course that once hovered around 50 percent are now considerably higher. Moreover, the wide black-white gap in course success that campus leaders noted with chagrin 10 years ago has completely disappeared. Students like the experience so much that they have pressed — successfully — for the redesign of other math courses.

It is important to note, though, that analyses of course success rates may point up a variety of needs. Data teams at many institutions, for example, find that even students who are successful in one course may not be successful in the one that follows it — raising questions not only about course design, but about vertical alignment. Teams may also find that, even in courses with common end-of-course exams, there are big differences in student success among sections taught by different faculty members — raising another set of questions. These can be important prompts for discussions about needed changes in both policy and practice.

## ANALYSIS 6

### HOW MANY STUDENTS WHO NEED REMEDIATION SUCCEED AT OUR INSTITUTION? DIGGING INTO THE DATA ON DEVELOPMENTAL COURSES, ESPECIALLY IN MATH

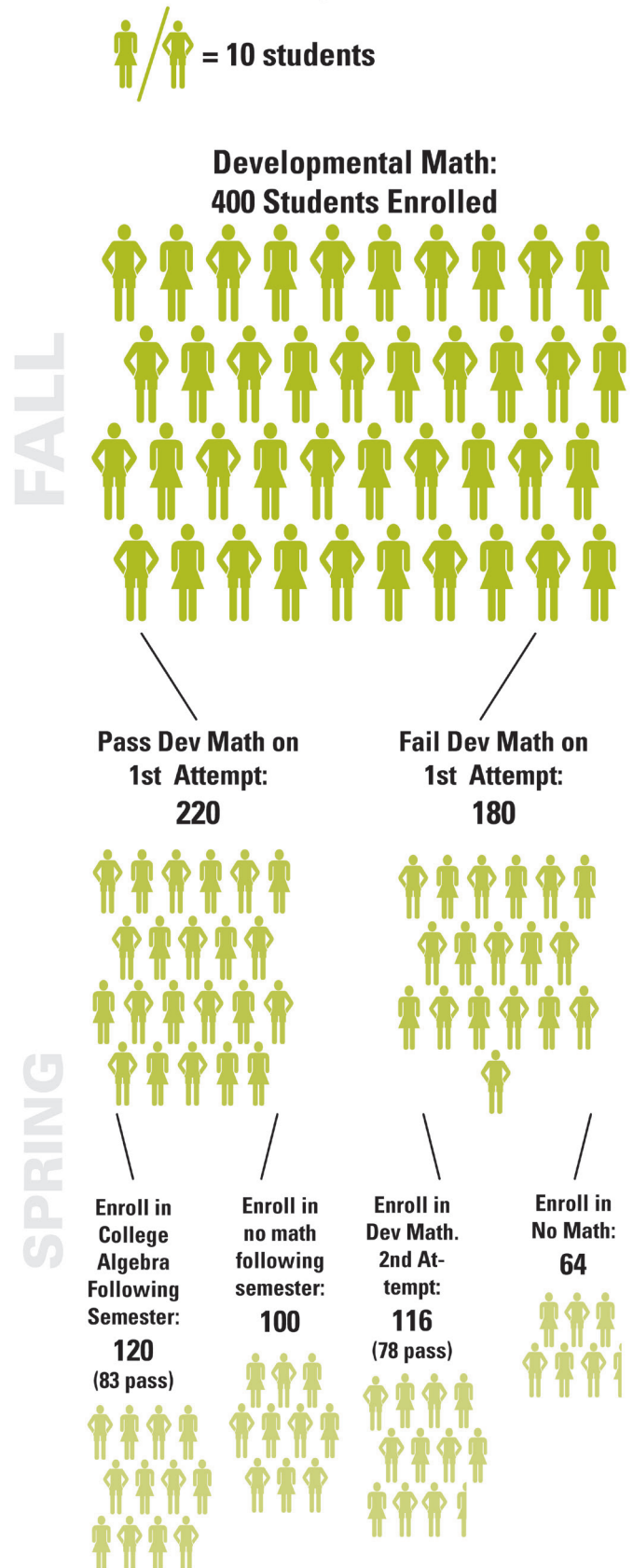
Between 60 and 70 percent of incoming community college students typically must take at least one developmental mathematics course before they can enroll in college-credit courses.<sup>3</sup> However, 80 percent of the students who place into developmental mathematics do not successfully complete any college-level course within three years.<sup>4</sup> Many students spend long periods of time repeating courses, and most simply leave college without a credential.

The numbers in four-year colleges and universities generally aren't quite this high. About 30 percent of students at four-year institutions took at least one remedial math course.<sup>5</sup> But here, the range is wide and success rates are often low, slowing — or even stopping — progress to a degree.

As shown in Figure 4, only 83 of the 400 students who needed developmental math and took it during the fall semester (often a problem in institutions that don't require students to immediately take any needed remedial courses) successfully completed a credit-bearing math course by the end of their first year. Given research suggesting that completing that credit-bearing math course during the freshman year roughly doubles a student's chance of completing the bachelor's degree, these numbers cry out for attention.<sup>6</sup>

What can be done? There is a lot of innovation currently going on in developmental education, including in some of the universities interviewed for this guide. Georgia State University, for example, brought course redesign to their developmental math courses using 24/7 labs — staffed by upper-level undergraduates — to make sure students are actually doing a

Figure 4





lot of mathematics and getting help immediately when they are stuck. Indeed, NCAT-supported work in mathematics is now so strong that participating institutions can radically improve their course success rates very quickly.

Others are experimenting with “co-requisite” remediation, where students are automatically placed into the credit-bearing math course, but get support — sometimes in the form of an extra developmental course, sometimes in the form of extra tutoring — on the side. Many community colleges, too, are participating in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s “Statway” or “Quantway” initiatives involving redesign of the developmental sequence and the first credit-bearing course into one year-long course, so students complete the latter during freshman year. The University of Texas’ Charles A. Dana Center has a similar effort, called “Mathway,” operating with community colleges in Texas.

It’s not clear — or at least not yet — that there is one best way to do this. What is clear is that leaving things as they are is not an option, or at least not for institutions that are committed to succeeding with the full range of students they admit.

## ANALYSIS 7

### **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR — OR A LACK THEREOF — IN STUDENT SUCCESS? ANALYZING THE DATA ON SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT FIELDS**

When the leaders at Virginia Commonwealth University explored their data, they saw very different retention patterns for students with different majors. By the third year, more than 90 percent of nursing students were still there, compared with only 67 percent of students whose major was initially undeclared.

The SWOT Retention Committee, organized in 2009 by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), found much of the same thing. Created to analyze critical factors affecting student retention and success and devise an action plan to increase retention, four-year graduation, and six-year graduation rates, the team extensively analyzed data by student group (Table 8) and identified successful programming inside and outside the university that supported retention and graduation. At the end of the year, the team had identified 12 key factors affecting student retention, not having declared a major by the end of the first year being a critical one.

Regardless of whether the problem is a particular major or the absence of a major, understanding patterns on your campus can be helpful. One suggestion is to run the numbers for all majors, as well as for students who are undeclared during their first (or first two) years. What you discover may help focus your inquiry. Asking, for example, what is happening in majors with the lowest success rates? Table 8 shows how to group that information.

We tend, of course, to think that majors will group here according to perceptions about how “hard” they are. But do they? Not, certainly, at all institutions. This simple analysis

## DATA EXAMINED BY UNCG’S SWOT RETENTION TEAM

To better understand factors associated with low first-to-second-year retention and overall graduation rates at University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Undergraduate Studies SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Retention Committee examined many data points, including:

- ▶ Retention by ethnicity and gender
- ▶ Retention by the number of attempted and completed credits
- ▶ Retention by special populations (e.g. summer launch, honors college, learning communities, special support services, first generation)
- ▶ Retention rates and unmet financial needs of in-state and out-of-state students
- ▶ Retention of undeclared freshmen students, the term in which a major was declared, and the impact on the GPA of being undeclared
- ▶ Average retention and graduation rates from the 2003-2007 cohorts both at UNCG and in the University of North Carolina System
- ▶ Percent of students who graduated within six years
- ▶ Reasons for student withdrawals

**Table 8**

<b>Majors with High Student Success</b>	<b>1st to 2nd Year Retention</b>	<b>4-year graduation rate</b>	<b>5-year graduation rate</b>	<b>6-year graduation rate</b>
<b>Majors with Low Student Success</b>	<b>1st to 2nd Year Retention</b>	<b>4-year graduation rate</b>	<b>5-year graduation rate</b>	<b>6-year graduation rate</b>

won't tell you much about why the success patterns differ. But it's a good first step in figuring out where to start digging.

## ANALYSIS 8

### *HOW EFFICIENT ARE WE IN GETTING STUDENTS TO A DEGREE WITHOUT EXCESS CREDITS? ANALYZING THE DATA ON UNITS COMPLETED*

When institutional research shops at many universities run the numbers on units completed by degree recipients, they often are stunned both by how high the averages are and how wide the range. When they dig deeper into the data, they see that some of the problem can be attributed to students changing majors one or more times on their journeys. But sometimes the problem lies with the institution: either with departments, for escalating their requirements for the bachelor's degree beyond what is typical elsewhere, or with the entire institution, for failing to provide students with clear maps toward their degrees.

Regardless, it is important to examine your data and see what the averages look like, as well as the range among different disciplines (Table 9).

To understand the numbers on your campus, it may be important to take a look at actual requirements for degrees in various disciplines. At some institutions, when nobody was looking, requirements inched above the normal, 120 credit-hour mark. In the belief that this practice slows students down without any clear benefit, many institutions are simply capping requirements at no more than 120 credit hours and providing exemptions only with a clear demonstration that the extra coursework is both essential and common practice elsewhere.

Steps like these can help, but they don't do much for students who wander inefficiently through their undergraduate years. Here, the kinds of degree maps produced by institutions like Florida State University, Georgia State University, and a growing number of others can be enormously helpful, as can more aggressive advising and early deadlines for students to declare either a major or at least a disciplinary "meta-major," so building-block coursework can be completed on time.

## ANALYSIS 9

### *WHAT PATHWAYS DO OUR STUDENTS TAKE ON THEIR JOURNEY TO A DEGREE? AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSCRIPTS*

Sometimes there's just no substitute for grabbing a sample of actual student transcripts, rolling up your sleeves, and digging in.

That's exactly what a group of 60 faculty members did at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire in an effort to better understand barriers to student progress, as well as what catalyzes it. They analyzed a large sample of transcripts individually to discover patterns and trends in course-taking habits, common bottlenecks, and whether or not students stayed on a particular academic track.

What did they learn? They found that up to one-third of their students were all over the place. When the analysis was restricted to graduating in four years, they learned that half of their students were off their academic paths.

They discussed the findings with both advisers and students, which helped them understand student challenges with course availability, as well as with navigating a difficult, opaque

**Table 9**

Major	Average Credits at the Bachelor's Degree	Average for Quartile of Majors with Fewest Credits	Average for Quartile of Majors with Most Credits

general education structure and determining which courses could help them advance toward their educational goals.

This digging process will be very helpful in completing analysis 10 (see below), because participants can tell the campus institutional research office what they saw in the transcript review, essentially “nominating” behaviors and practices for further study.

The following are suggested areas of focus:

- Lags between developmental courses and the credit-bearing courses that should follow them
- Poor performance in key lower division courses required for the major
- Pattern of withdrawing from courses
- Lack of continuous enrollment
- Delays in completing (or even enrolling in) core general education requirements like college English, college math, and foreign language.

When the University of Southern California (USC) impaneled a task force to work on increasing retention and graduation rates, one hot topic of inquiry was the rate at which students completed core requirements for their major and graduation. After a lot of digging, task force members discovered that the failure to complete USC’s three-semester foreign language (FLAN) requirement was the largest single factor preventing graduation for many students who were close to earning sufficient credits for a degree. USC’s analysis of unsuccessful students revealed that many high credit-earning, non-completers or non-timely completers put off completion of the FLAN into their final semesters.

After examining the FLAN requirement’s role in these analyses, the task force asked itself, “What is the right approach to enforce completion of the FLAN requirement without damaging the academic progress of our students in other areas such as general education, other major courses, and possibly minor courses?”

Inspired by Harvard University’s policy of placing students on probation if they do not complete the two-semester foreign language requirement before the beginning of the

fifth semester, USC chose to implement a similar policy that enforced a timetable for FLAN completion.

The task force collaborated with the policies and procedures committee, as well as the faculty committee, to eventually modify university policy. As of fall 2013, any student admitted as a freshman into a degree program that requires a foreign language or admitted as a freshman with undecided or undeclared status must satisfy the language requirement before the beginning of his or her fifth semester at USC.

Transfer students have a slightly different policy. A student who transfers or makes a change of major into a degree program with a language requirement must satisfy the requirement before the beginning of his or her fourth full semester in the program. Students who do not satisfy the requirement on time will be placed on academic probation and required to enroll in a language course each semester until the requirement has been satisfied. Failure to abide by the terms of probation will result in academic disqualification.

Though only recently implemented, officials hope these approaches will help students better plan their academic pathways and complete their degrees on time.

## ANALYSIS 10

### *HOW DO THE PIECES OF STUDENT SUCCESS — OR FAILURE — FIT TOGETHER? CONDUCTING A FULLER ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PATHWAYS*

Each of the analyses described in this guide are useful for calling attention to student success, and in beginning the broad-based, problem-solving process necessary to turn around success patterns in most institutions. But these simple analyses don’t necessarily provide the broader insights that are often necessary to mount an effective change strategy — in part because they don’t tell you much about what matters most. That requires looking at how the various factors fit together. And it also requires thinking differently about the data, looking for messages about what the institution can do differently rather than just for more information on problems with students.

The SWOT Retention Committee at UNCG, described earlier, was intended as an institution-wide rethinking of retention and

success efforts. The diverse team united representatives from student achievement, housing and residence life, academic services, orientation and family programs, institutional research, and a variety of academic disciplines.

Meeting twice a month, the SWOT team analyzed micro student group data and identified successful programming that supported retention and graduation. As a result, the team was able to identify the key factors affecting retention that were amenable to university action. (See sidebar on page 8.)

True to its name, the team then elaborated on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to student retention efforts at UNCG. Armed with insights from data analyses, effective local programs, national best practices, and the SWOT analysis, the team proposed a comprehensive model integrating university programming and services. The goal was to provide customized strategies to address the challenges associated with students who were most at risk of leaving.

A team member recalls the process: “We began to develop tailored, individual strategies for the students most in need, most in peril. We knew, for instance, that those students who were undecided were more at peril than those who came in embracing a major. So, we created an advising task force to investigate ways to help these students explore and declare a major within the first year.”

As a result, the university established a Students First Office, a home for these “exploratory” students that provided an exploratory major program, more frequent and targeted advising and mentoring support, and access to the DegreeWorks software program to help students become more intentional about their short and long-term course-taking choices. Preliminary data on the effectiveness of these efforts show they contributed to an increase in retention among undeclared students from 76 percent in 2010-11 to a current 80 percent.

The UNCG team’s work had much in common with later efforts at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). The team there followed all first-time freshmen enrolled in fall 2007 to the fall 2009 semester to determine the two-year retention rate and factors that influenced retention. They examined demographic elements (race/ethnicity, gender, residency), academic background (SAT score and high school GPA), Pell Grant status, living in university housing, major, and academic performance each term at VCU.

After two years, 72 percent of freshmen at VCU remained enrolled. But underneath that average, the patterns were very different for students with different academic records. Students who were in good academic standing had a two-year retention rate more than twice those not in good academic standing. In fact, first semester performance (GPA) was the single strongest predictor of retention, with second semester performance (GPA) being the second strongest predictor.

To the surprise of the team at VCU, SAT scores were not good predictors of completion — except for students at the high end of the scale.<sup>6</sup> High school GPAs were better predictors, but not

as strong as academic performance during the first year. The finding that academic work (high school and college GPA) was more important than measured academic ability helped inform conversations on whether to raise the minimum SAT score required for admission and other potential “completion management” tactics.

These and many other analyses of campus data were presented to every major authoritative body at the institution, including the president, vice presidents, council of deans, and board members, who eagerly engaged their respective teams to follow up on the findings. They agreed that the key to increasing the graduation rate was to improve academic performance and increase retention in the second and third years.

In pursuit of these goals, VCU sought to strengthen and improve the programs in the University College to prepare first-year students for college-level work. Features include an elaborate summer orientation followed by a mandatory, cohort-based, two semesters-long experience supported by proactive advising, tutoring, and related services. The result?

VCU has seen an increase in first-to-second-year retention rates, peaking at 86 percent in 2012-13, and an increase in good academic standing after the first year from 73 percent to 82 percent.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What do student success data management systems look like at the institutions that are furthest along?

Florida State University and Georgia State University have been working on improving student success for longer than most other institutions. Over the years, they have moved from brief, back-of-the-envelope analyses of key data to building very sophisticated systems that continue to deepen their understanding of what matters and that automate many of the basic processes of tracking student progress and triggering immediate human action when students go off track. These systems help enormously in the effort to ensure student success, driving accountability throughout the system but especially in advising.

### Florida State University

One of the insights faculty get when they “interrogate” their various sources of data is that the undergraduate experience isn’t very coherent for many students — especially those left on their own to choose their way through the curriculum. To attack this problem, FSU created during the 2004-05 school year an academic tracking system, known as Mapping (MAP), embedded in its Student Academic Support System (SASS). Every undergraduate major offered at FSU is presented to students in an eight-term, two-column format that identifies all courses required for successful completion, including graduation requirements and electives, and all milestones that students must complete within the tracking system.

Milestones are conditions, courses, or activities that students must complete at specified points during the degree program. Students learn about MAPs during the admissions process,



orientation, and counseling sessions. Each semester, after the add/drop deadline has passed, “mapping coordinators” receive the following reports to use in advising students:

- Students who have not registered for the milestones in their current term
- Students who have not registered for a current milestone and/or a milestone for the next semester

After grades are posted at the end of the fall and spring semesters, a systems-generated report reviews every student for the following:

- Student information: ID, first name, last name, e-mail address
- Current major and term checked
- Current MAP term against the milestones for all terms up to and including the current term
- A column for each semester that the student has been at the university that indicates whether or not the student has been on or off-track

If a student meets the MAP requirements for the current term, his or her MAP term indicator is advanced by one. If a student fails to meet the MAP requirement and is determined as off-course, the system will place the appropriate MAP stop on the student’s registration record and send an alert e-mail. If the student fails to meet the MAP requirement for the first time, he or she is required to meet with an adviser prior to registering for the next term. If this occurs for two consecutive semesters, the student will be required to change majors. As part of a broader effort to identify predictors of success within student programs and help students progress toward timely graduations, students are only allowed to enter a major for which they are on course.

Mapping has extended benefits to both the students and the university. Through this process, students are empowered to monitor their own progress, predict a timely graduation contingent on their academic performance, and choose majors that work best for them. Mapping has enabled advisers to provide more intentional and customized support to prospective and current students.

Additionally, the University Demand Analysis Numbers Group (comprised of registrar, undergraduate studies, and mapping representatives) uses this data to more accurately predict enrollment and course demand

to subsequently revise course offerings to meet the needs of the students.

In terms of impact, fall-to-fall retention of first-time-in-college students continues to improve, six-year graduation rates are slowly climbing, and the four-year graduation rates seem to be positively affected, all because of an integrated suite of institutional efforts.

## Georgia State University

In August 2012, Georgia State University launched its Graduation and Progression Success (GPS) Advising, which uses historical data, including seven years of retention, progression, and graduation data (with over two million grades earned by past and present students), to develop more than 700 alerts that indicate behaviors that put a student at risk of not graduating. The value of these alerts lies in their ability to notify the student and the university about actions that could be detrimental to the student’s progress and to offer an opportunity to proactively address the action.

Some of the alerts apply generally to all students; others apply to specific disciplines. Sample alerts include the following:

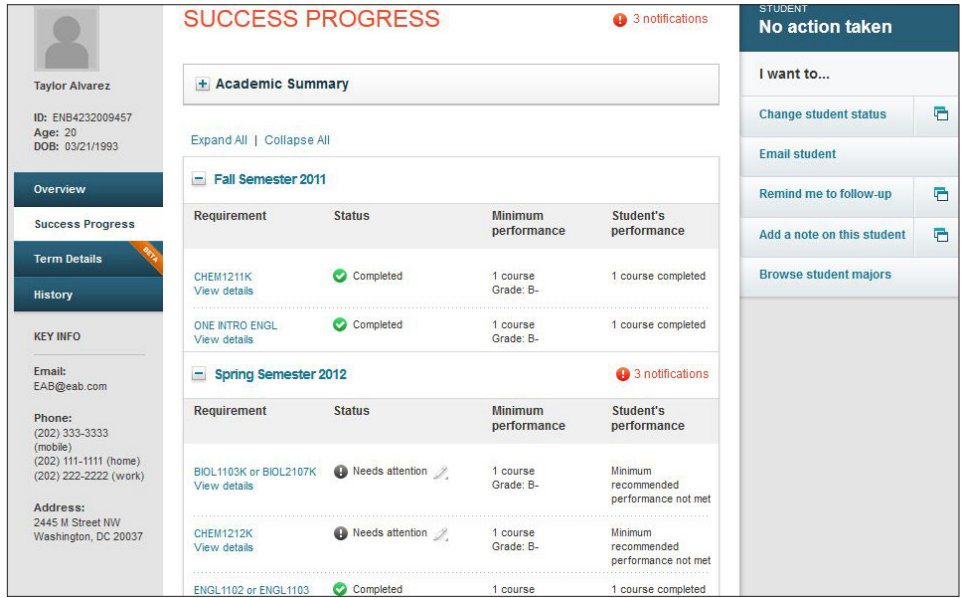
- General alerts:
  - ♦ Failure to achieve a minimum grade in a course central to success in a major
  - ♦ Failure to complete a course by a particular point in one’s academic career
  - ♦ Registration for a course that does not apply to a student’s program of study
- Discipline-specific alerts:
  - ♦ Biology majors need to take BIO 1112 by the time they reach 30 units
  - ♦ Nursing students need to earn a B+ in their first math course
  - ♦ Accounting students need to earn a B+ in their first math course
- Service-specific alerts:
  - ♦ Accounting majors receiving tutoring are asked to take additional math before registering for upper-level accounting courses

Patterns of past students’ performance also offer predictive analytics for how each student will fare in every major and most courses offered by the university. But they are not just predictions: The entire system is designed to trigger an institutional response aimed at helping that student succeed. For example, political science majors who get an A or B in POLS 1101 have a 70 percent or greater probability of graduating on time compared with 25 percent for majors who get a C in the same course. This alert now provides a call for action (e.g., assist the student with targeted support, have him/her choose another major) for a behavior that in the past would have been under the radar, particularly as the student still earned a passing grade in the course.



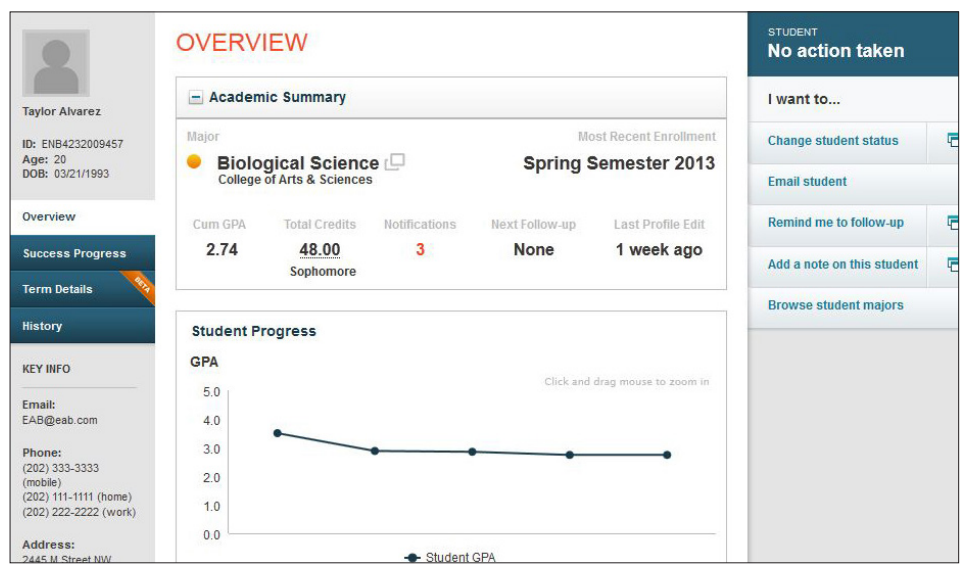
**An FSU website, Academic Program Guide, contains all of the current MAPs for all undergraduate majors offered at FSU. Link: [www.academic-guide.fsu.edu/Maps/Mapexploratory.html](http://www.academic-guide.fsu.edu/Maps/Mapexploratory.html)**

**Figure 5**



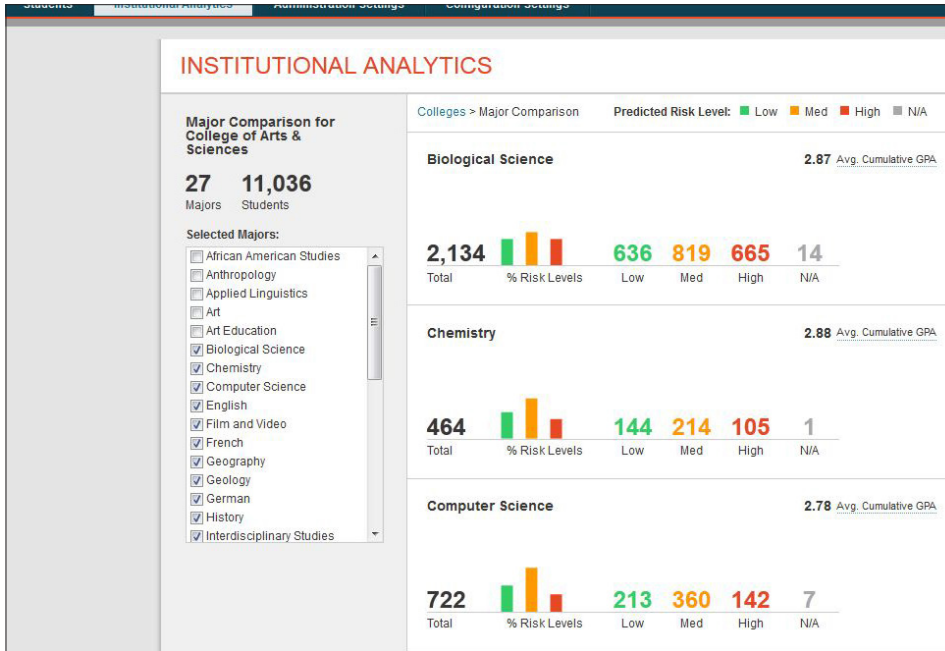
All alerts triggered in one day are automatically sent (Figure 5) to the advisers by the following morning. At that point, the advisers have 24 hours to reach students.

**Figure 6**



In a single screen (Figure 6), the GPS system captures all critical information about a student's progress including his or her major, GPA, credit hours, holds, alerts, risk factors, remaining courses, previous advising interactions, contact information, and a one-click feature to e-mail the student. In addition to being able to review a student's performance in a holistic manner, advisers also have the ability to generate custom reports in a matter of seconds. Beyond advising, the university tracks analytics by department, college, and university levels.

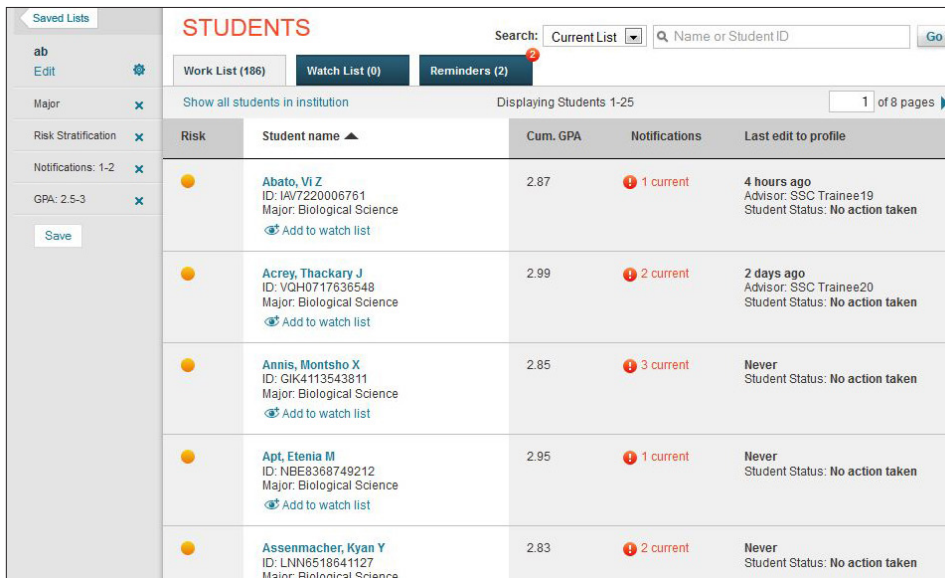
**Figure 7**



The GPS system aims to empower students, advisers, and the university (Figures 7 and 8) with data about specific, actionable information on students' status and progress toward a timely graduation without excess credits. Georgia State's emphasis on the value of real-time, systemic, and systematic use of data and analytics carries great potential.

Bearing in mind that any results are a combination of simultaneous university efforts, preliminary results show a graduation rate increase of between 2 and 3 percentage points, as well as the highest number of degrees ever conferred. More specifically, the university's predictive analytics reported that 2 out of 3 sophomores improved their chances for a timely graduation.

**Figure 8**



## CONCLUSION

We hope these 10 analyses — all drawn from institutions that have gotten some real traction on their own student success problems — expand your institutional toolbox of analyses to improve student success.

Obviously, data alone can't tell you what to do about the problems these analyses point up. Indeed, without the right kind of framing, it is easy for campus teams to see what they have always seen — *students as the problems* — instead of focusing on what the data may suggest about problems with campus policies or practices. Indeed, if anything is clear from the experiences of campuses that are on sustained improvement trajectories, it is that they have made the transition from seeing the demographics of their students as destiny to understanding that colleges really can, through sustained efforts, radically reshape their student success rates without becoming more selective. ■

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## ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST

The Education Trust promotes high academic achievement for all students at all levels — pre-kindergarten through college. We work alongside parents, educators, and community and business leaders across the country in transforming schools and colleges into institutions that serve all students well. Lessons learned in these efforts, together with unflinching data analyses, shape our state and national policy agendas. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people — especially those who are black, Latino, American Indian, or from low-income families — to lives on the margins of the American mainstream.

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Amit co-founded Academic Impressions in 2002 to provide a variety of educational products and services that help higher education administrators tackle key, strategic challenges. Since 2002, AI has designed and directed hundreds of conferences and has served representatives from over 3,500 higher education institutions. Besides designing and leading events for cabinet-level officers focused on strategic planning, budgeting, and leadership development, Amit leads Academic Impressions' ongoing research into the five- and 10-year challenges facing higher education and plays a lead role in outlining each issue of *Higher Ed Impact: Diagnostic* to highlight how college and university leaders can take an institution-wide approach to answering those challenges.

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A middle-aged man with graying hair, wearing a blue sweater over a light blue collared shirt, is the central focus. He is holding a light blue laptop and looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a silver watch on his left wrist. The background is a blurred office environment with computer monitors and another person sitting at a desk.

# **THE OTHER HIGHER-ED BUBBLE**

**(THE BUBBLE WE AREN'T TALKING ABOUT)**



# SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION

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In recent years federal officials, the media, and prominent public figures have argued that higher education is the next big financial “bubble.” These concerns, driven largely by the fact that total student debt has now surpassed credit card debt, seem reasonable on the surface. But this argument paints our nation’s diverse higher-education enterprise with one broad brush stroke, overstating the financial problem some sectors face and potentially distracting our attention from other, more fundamental risks to higher ed’s future outlook.

## NEEDED: A NEW DIAGNOSIS

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It’s my view that what isn’t being talked about is a bubble of another type—a “denial” bubble. Institutional leaders continue to rely on what has worked in the past while

ignoring critical warning signs—increasing costs, stagnant revenues, market shifts, and declining public trust in higher education—that require a new and different approach.

Unfortunately there is little evidence to suggest that institutional leaders are addressing the root causes of these issues. Instead, the evidence points to leaders who are applying yesterday’s approaches and solutions to today’s problems. Higher-ed leaders over-emphasize factors outside their control, rely too heavily on long-standing assumptions, and simply aren’t acting with enough urgency.

## A CALL TO ACTION FOR HIGHER ED LEADERSHIP

---

If institutions “in the middle” (see *sidebar At Risk: Institutions in the Middle*) are to remain competitive and accessible in the years ahead, their leaders must heed the warning signs and push boldly for greater innovations that will simultaneously lower costs and improve quality. This will mean moving beyond incremental changes and fundamentally re-imagining who an institution serves and how.



## AT RISK: INSTITUTIONS IN THE MIDDLE

Recently, there has been an important shift in enrollment. Students are increasingly choosing either institutions of established quality and reputation or institutions that are highly affordable.

Institutions in the middle are being squeezed and are struggling to compete for new students. These institutions, without a clear pricing or competitive advantage, face serious threats and questions about their future survival.

All competitive sectors of higher education, however, should be paying careful attention to risk factors and moving their campuses to action. Most institutions are increasingly tuition dependent, and as we will see, there are significant pressures on this important revenue stream.

The key to this will be engaging the passion and skills of an institution's many talented faculty and staff. This is the challenge for institutional leaders. Only they can initiate these discussions and create the right environment to support the experimentation, the risk taking, and the willingness to make the inevitable mistakes that accompany innovation.

## LOOKING AHEAD

---

This paper is the first in an ongoing series. Once we've presented you with this diagnosis and call to action, future papers from Academic Impressions will focus on the ideas and innovations that address some of the risks and opportunities facing higher education today.

We hope you'll read this paper and discuss it with your colleagues.



## IS THERE A FINANCIAL BUBBLE?

As government-subsidized debt continues to fuel higher ed's growth, there is increasing speculation as to whether higher ed is the next bubble to burst—following the real estate burst of 2008 and the dot-com burst in 2000. Like those industries, higher ed cannot sustain its volume of customers without large infusions of subsidized debt and equity.

The financial bubble argument gained significant traction in 2010 when the total amount of student loan debt in this country surpassed credit card debt. Some have used this milestone, coming on the heels of the Great Recession, to imply that, like housing, higher education is another part of the American Dream that is going to be increasingly difficult to reach.

### WHY IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE

One of the primary challenges with this argument is that it paints higher ed with a single brushstroke, and the reality is that

the different sectors—community colleges, independents, publicly-supported, and for-profits (to say nothing of different competitive sectors)—graduate students with very different debt loads, job prospects, and core skills. The cost of a credit hour can vary dramatically—from less than \$100 to over \$600. Each sector's and each institution's value proposition varies significantly.

**In 2007-2008, the median debt for bachelor's degree recipients was:**

**\$17,700**

PUBLIC  
FOUR-YEAR

**\$22,380**

PRIVATE,  
NONPROFIT  
FOUR-YEAR

**\$32,650**

PRIVATE,  
FOR-PROFIT  
FOUR-YEAR

(College Board, "Trends in Student Aid")



In the other “bubbles”—in both the tech and housing industries—values were inflated beyond what the market would bear and what could be justified against either historical or projected data. Tech companies were valued at irrational prices, and housing had inflated beyond what people could reasonably afford.

In the case of higher education; however, most measures continue to indicate that the investment pays off—even in a slow-growth economy. According to the Pew report [“How Much Protection Does a College Degree Afford?”](#) during the depth of the recession, the unemployment rate for those with bachelor’s degrees was half that of people with only a high school diploma—and never exceeded 5%. Life-time earnings for those with bachelor’s degrees will exceed high school diplomas by more than \$1 million.

This fact, before all others, will continue to drive the political will, market demand, and philanthropic support for higher education. As wage inequality in this country continues to rise, higher education is the primary and increasingly exclusive gateway to the middle class. From the President’s college

completion agenda to rebounding strength in giving, higher ed will benefit from important tailwinds. These tailwinds will continue to provide the necessary financial support, but only in the near term.



43%

The number of board members, across the industry, who state their institutions are doing everything possible to control costs and keep tuition and fees affordable for students.

74%

The number of college presidents, across the industry, who state that their institutions cannot sustain additional budget cuts without negatively impacting quality.

(IHE/Gallup survey of college presidents) (AGB 2012 survey of college and university board members)

# A DIAGNOSIS OF HIGHER ED LEADERSHIP

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These are two of the most alarming statistics that I've seen in my experience in higher ed because they represent a mindset that will prevent—not enable—the difficult decisions, hard work, and innovation that all institutions, especially at-risk institutions,

need. Money doesn't necessarily translate to greater quality and competitiveness. In fact, as new money is going to be more difficult to come by, institutions will need to challenge themselves to rethink how education can be delivered at higher levels of quality and lower levels of cost.

While higher education as a whole may not represent a financial bubble in the short term—as there are still important tailwinds behind the industry—in the long term, there are significant red flags to which all institutional leaders, not just those immediately at risk, must respond. Yet, higher-ed leaders remain dangerously unresponsive to these challenges and continue to rely on an old playbook of policies

and practices, making merely incremental changes—addressing administrative inefficiencies, outsourcing, eliminating low enrollment programs, postponing salary increases, tuition increases—while waiting for external factors to improve.

*Yesterday's answer has nothing to do with today's problem."*

- Bill Gates  
Founder, Microsoft

*"What evidence do we have that these factors will improve? Why are we waiting? Waiting is not bold leadership."*

- Pat Sanaghan  
The Sanaghan Group

Let's review four assumptions, rooted in past practices and experiences, that no longer hold true and that often hold leaders back from taking a new and different approach:

- Demand for higher education is inelastic.
- New sources of revenue will always be available.
- Higher ed will always be consumed in the same way.
- The public's faith is unwavering.



## FALSE ASSUMPTION #1: DEMAND IS INELASTIC

It's hard to argue that higher education isn't pushing the limits of what the market will bear. For years, demand for higher education seemed inelastic. Institutions in all sectors were able to increase tuition rates while enrolling larger and larger classes. But without rigorous controls over the institution's core product—the academic credential—institutions have increasingly expanded their curriculum without ensuring that the new programs were a strategic fit with existing offerings, the institution's core competencies, or its competitive market position.

Institutions have also invested heavily in luxury facilities and amenities, including suite-style residence halls, climbing walls, hot tubs, expansive recreation centers, and gourmet dining halls. Independent of the actual cost of these amenities (which the [Delta Cost Project](#) argues is not significant), the public perceives rising and significant costs for services and amenities that don't directly add educational value.

*“Institutions are trying to do everything they can get their hands on in the mistaken belief that they're more appealing to the masses... This is a failure to focus and identify their niche and really, really become good at it.... Higher-ed leaders are rarely willing to make the tough decisions. And so in order to sustain the enterprise, they have to generate more revenue and they think the best way to do that is to get into new offerings and programming.”*

-Larry Goldstein  
Campus Strategies, LLC



## Subsidizing the Costs of Higher Education

### *Subsidizing Teaching & Research Activities*

Despite a decline in average subsidies across most institutions, subsidies of education and related spending per FTE student are still significant:

- Public institutions range from \$5,880 per FTE (Master's institutions) to \$7,340 per FTE (Research institutions)
- Private institutions range from \$1,632 per FTE (Master's institutions) to \$14,350 per FTE (Research institutions)

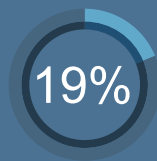
Source: Spending, Subsidies, and Tuition: Why are Prices Going Up? What are Tuitions Going to Pay For?, A Delta Data Update, 2000-2010

### *Subsidizing Auxiliary Revenues*

According to [“Winning by Degrees,”](#) a 2010 McKinsey and company study, a growing number of institutions also subsidize auxiliary revenues, which have historically been considered self-sustaining operations, such as housing, dining, and the campus store.



of institutions subsidize auxiliary revenues by \$1,000 per student.



of institutions subsidize auxiliary revenues by \$500 per student.

These cost increases are especially unsustainable when you consider that tuition does not cover the total cost of education per student. All institutions subsidize that cost, some to the tune of many thousands of dollars per student. Many institutions find themselves increasing that subsidy as other funding sources decline and as the cost of operations and the cost of providing an education increase.

While many in higher education believe these rising costs are due to factors outside an institution's control—such as declining state funding, rising compliance and healthcare costs, and rising technology costs—there are also many contributing factors that are within an institution's control, including: [administrative bloat](#), [the decision to sustain low enrollment programs](#), and [inefficient services](#).

Yet, despite the multiple opportunities for material cost reduction, institutional leaders have instead preferred the slower, more politically expedient approach of incremental cost cutting.





# FALSE ASSUMPTION #2: THERE WILL ALWAYS BE MORE REVENUE OUT THERE



## CHECKING THE DATA

### Slowing Revenue: A Long-Term Problem



and



...failed to achieve 2% tuition revenue growth (equal to the Fed's target inflation rate) in fiscal 2011.

AND the number of institutions unable to grow revenue past inflation...has increased for the last three years.

Total operating revenues per student:

- Community colleges suffered a 7% decline between 2009 and 2010
- Public master's institutions saw a slight increase (1%)
- Bachelor's degree-granting institutions were flat
- Only public research institutions saw an increase: 8%

Additionally, according to a study completed by Moody's on the 500+ colleges they rate, between 2000 - 2011: Average institutional debt levels more than doubled, and liquid assets relative to debt declined more than 40%.

Source: Moody's 2013 Higher Education Outlook




## The Marketplace Is Pushing Back, Putting Pressure on Revenue

This [College Board study](#) shows that in the last thirty years, tuition has risen 3.5 times for public four-year institutions, 2.8 times for public two-year institutions, and 2.6 for private nonprofit four-year institutions.

- Average tuition is now approximately 37.7% of a median family's earnings (Bain Capital).
- In the 2011-2012 academic year, US families spent, on average, 5% less on higher education than the year prior (Sallie May annual study, "How America Pays for College 2012").
- While overall giving to institutions was up over 8% in 2011, a disproportionate amount of the money raised by institutions (\$30.30 billion in 2011) went to the top 20 institutions. The bottom 75% of institutions actually saw giving fall 9.6%. (Voluntary State of Education annual report).
- NSF research funding has declined for the last two years and potentially faces an additional 8.3% cut in sequestration (Moody's 2013 US Higher Education Outlook).

Historically, institutions have responded to rising costs by pursuing new revenue streams to fund their operations—whether from tuition, private gifts, or research grants and contracts.

Unfortunately, in recent years, higher education has seen a material slowdown in revenue growth. Published sticker prices are growing faster than gross tuition revenue, meaning institutions have to increase discounts as more students prove either unable or unwilling to pay the full cost of rising tuition fees. Each year that revenues remain flat against a backdrop of rising costs, an institution's future outlook becomes more at risk.

At Academic Impressions events and at ACE, AGB, and other industry conferences I attend where institutional presidents, provosts, and trustees gather, there is a widely shared opinion that new revenue streams will be harder to come by. And this opinion is borne out by the data: 



In the absence of new revenues that can keep pace with costs, many institutions, historically underleveraged, have fueled expansion by taking on increasing debt, encumbering their future budgets with increased debt service payments and limiting their financial flexibility. Only recently have we seen a slowdown in issuance as institutional leaders grow more concerned about future revenue.

With revenue already in decline and with weaker potential for future growth, institutional leaders face difficult questions. Where will new and sustainable revenue streams come from, and what steps must be taken today to ensure these opportunities aren't overlooked?





## FALSE ASSUMPTION #3: IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

*“It’s not clear that people spend enough energy thinking about their unique position in the Higher Ed marketplace, their source of unique competitive advantage...they all seem to be following the Harvard label. And you don’t have to, right? And you don’t have to only cede that ground to the for-profits. The for-profits aren’t the only ones who can figure out how to differentiate their positioning.”*

-Srikant Vasam

Founder and President, Pormont College, at Mount St. Mary’s College

Between 2008 and 2009, more than 860,000 new students enrolled at a college or university, representing an increase of 5%. All sectors of higher education added students, but some took a greater share of the market than others—driven (in part) by the shifting composition of students and their expectations. More students are attending school part-time and more students work while pursuing their degree or certificate. Unfortunately, most four-year institutions have little history of accommodating the needs of nontraditional students effectively and instead, continue to design academic

programming and administrative services with only traditional high school students in mind.

For-profits, on the other hand, have innovated to meet the needs of the growing nontraditional student population, by:

- Restructuring the academic year.
- Changing semester lengths.
- Taking steps to move away from seat-time as the prevailing model by which credits are earned (offering evening/ weekend courses and online courses).



## Competitiveness by Sector

Over 10 years:

- Four-year, nonprofit institutions have seen a drop in market share of 5.2%.
- For-profit institutions have seen a 4.6% increase.
- Community colleges have also seen an increase of about 0.7%.

(Delta Cost Project, “Trends in College Spending 1999-2009”)

## New Entrants in the Marketplace

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and the Khan Academy have attempted to offer high quality content for free. While it’s too early to gauge the impact, if any, of these new players, these responses to shifting demographics and shifting student expectations make it clear that the marketplace is getting more competitive.

*“All but the most elite universities face diminished student demand and increased price sensitivity... [due to] the prolonged period of depressed family income and household net worth, as well as the dip in the number of domestic high school graduates since the peak of 3.34 million for school year 2007–2008.”*

-Moody’s 2013 Higher Education Outlook

Yet, despite this diminished student demand and increased price sensitivity, many selective nonprofit institutions prize how few students they enroll rather than how many. At a time when far fewer than half of high school students complete a college degree, this is not only financially imprudent, it is morally irresponsible. Against a backdrop of unacceptably high unemployment, it’s no wonder that the majority of the general public thinks colleges and universities are out of touch with their needs and care more about their own bottom line than the public good.



## FALSE ASSUMPTION #4: THE VALUE OF A POST-SECONDARY CREDENTIAL IS A GIVEN

According to a [poll conducted by TIME and the Carnegie Corporation](#), 89% of US adults said higher education is in a crisis. Even more concerning: 54% of the general public thinks higher education is moving further down the wrong track.

Public voices, industry experts, and think tanks increasingly:

- Suggest that post-secondary institutions are operating in financially unsustainable ways.
- Question the value of the academic credential.

In the past few years, questions have been raised about the quality of the institution's primary product—the academic credential. Despite a great deal of attention by legislators, parents, administrators, and

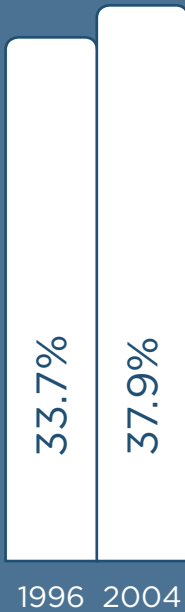
faculty, graduation rates over the last ten years have remained relatively flat, with approximately 38% of degree-seeking students in the 2004 cohort actually receiving a degree within four years ([NCES Digest of Education Statistics 2011](#)). That is an increase of less than 4% over the 1996 cohort, and the overall numbers remain unacceptably low.

And according to *Academically Adrift* (2011), which examined a group of students who took the Collegiate Learning Assessment (an instrument that measures students' ability to think critically, reason, and communicate), 36% of students did not show any significant improvement in learning after four years of college. The students that did show improvement, showed only modest gains.

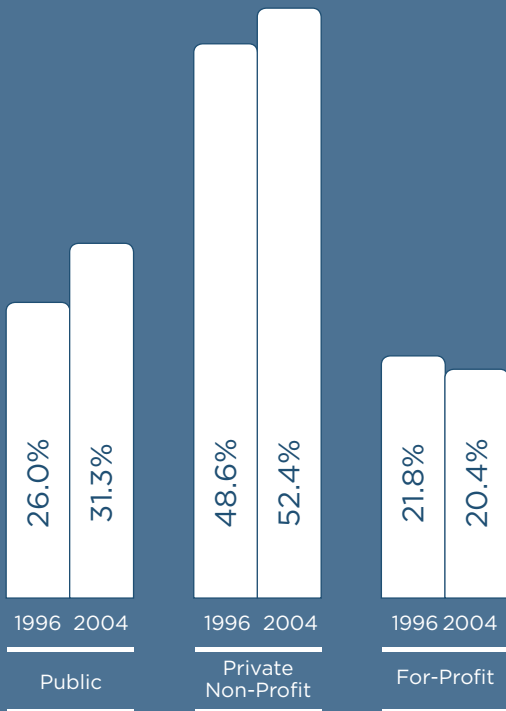




### Graduation Rates



All 4-year Institutions



(NCES, Digest of Education Statistics, Table 345)

*In short, the public believes that higher education delivers progressively less value at progressively higher cost to the student.*

The combination of declining revenues and increasing costs speaks to the fact that higher ed's existing financial model is unsustainable. Fundamental and continuing shifts in the market require that institutions adapt their models for the design and delivery of education. And even as these changes become increasingly imperative, the erosion of the public trust in higher education presents significant challenges to higher-ed leaders' ability to muster the public support, funding, and goodwill that can help empower their efforts.

All of these challenges can be addressed, if the will to change and the courage to make bold decisions exists. Yet, if past and current decision making is any indication, this bold leadership and openness to challenging long-standing assumptions is precisely what is missing.



## Overconfident in the Value of the Academic Product

### THE DENIAL BUBBLE

As I have demonstrated, institutional leaders are operating on the basis of what has worked in the past, not necessarily what will work in the future. Generally speaking, leaders are not heeding these glaring warning signs with the appropriate urgency. This leads to what I believe is a denial bubble.

This denial bubble becomes visible when you take several factors into account.

First, multiple recent surveys have independently confirmed that, on the whole, four-year college and university leaders remain unperturbed by the warning signs we've noted—despite the fact that the general public believes that higher education is entering a time of crisis: →

- 89% of US adults believe higher ed is in crisis.

**Yet:**

- 52% of college leaders feel the opposite.

(TIME/Carnegie survey)

.....

- Only 40% of consumers believe colleges provide an “excellent” or “good” value for the money invested.

**Yet:**

- 76% of all college and university presidents believe their institutions deliver a “good” to “excellent” value:

(Pew Research Center)

.....

Yet another example:

- 72% of college presidents find their institution very effective at providing a quality undergraduate education.

(IHE/Gallup survey of college presidents)



It's not just college presidents who rate the value their institutions offer so much higher than the public.

### BOARD MEMBERS:

- 55% of board members think that, generally, a college education costs too much relative to its value.

### Yet:

- 62% believe that an education at their institution costs what it should.
- 43% believe their institution is doing “all it can” to keep tuition and fees affordable to students.

(AGB 2012 survey of college and university board members)

There is a significant gap between the public perception of the value of the academic product and institutional leaders' confidence in the present and future value of their product.

But this isn't just a gap in the perception of higher ed's sustainability. As we have seen, there is also a clear disconnect between today's expenditures and tomorrow's income streams.

Taken together, these data suggest that too many institutional leaders are either overconfident or in denial, and are ultimately not taking the action needed to ensure their institution's financial health and competitiveness in the mid and long term.

## ARE LEADERS READY TO MAKE THE TOUGH BUT NECESSARY DECISIONS?

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Besides being overconfident in the perceived value of their academic product, many higher-ed leaders demonstrate both a lack of will for rapid change and an uncritical commitment to the practices and approaches of the past.

In a 2012 survey of board members, nearly half believe their institution is doing “everything it can” to reduce expenses. When I have surveyed CFOs and provosts informally, they cite limited opportunity to restructure their budgets given their high fixed cost structure; they note that salaries account for 75-85% of their institution’s total expenditures.

But why should these fixed costs be taken as a given? While any changes to personnel have to be handled with care and integrity (especially when academic programs are concerned), it is a strategic error to assume either that salaries are a permanent cost or that the institution is deriving the maximum possible value from these investments.

*“In staffing, we’re organized around the faculty instead of being organized around the student, which means each department has a secretary, an admissions officer, an HR person, a PR person, a mail room, and it’s ridiculous.”*

-Betty Phillips  
Provost, Arizona State University

At the 2013 ACE annual conference, I attended a session called “Fixing College: Is the Business Model Broken?” Hoping for a provocative discussion amongst the nation’s higher-ed leaders, I was disappointed that many of the participants who spoke up during the session called for less regulation and lamented the increasing costs of technology and of compensation and benefits. Are these really the reasons why the business model of higher ed is broken? And to repair that model, must institutional leaders simply wait for changes to these external factors, which remain outside their control?



## ADDITIONAL EXAMPLE

*“Here’s an additional example. Faculty governance often serves, effectively, as a major barrier to change. Faculty Senates and Faculty Unions have arrogated to themselves all kinds of power that they shouldn’t have. Institutions with strong faculty unions are afraid to take action in the summer months, for example, for fear the faculty will revolt. (Can you imagine an organization in another sector putting decisions on hold for a third of the year?) Canadian institutions are restricted in their ability to fire low-performing faculty due to a combination of statute and collective bargaining agreements. Institutions remain wary of making decisions that may impinge on an undefined or incorrectly defined ‘academic freedom.’ As a result, institutions are not as nimble as they need to be.”*

-Bob Dickeson,  
Author, *Prioritizing Academic  
Programs and Services*  
President Emeritus, University of  
Northern Colorado

## THE OPPORTUNITY OF QUICK ACTION

Bold and courageous leadership is going to be necessary to close the gap between the (high) value higher-ed leaders believe their institutions offer and the (low) value the public perceives them to be offering. Fortunately, as we’ve noted, there are tailwinds behind the higher-ed industry, and institutional leaders do have time and opportunity to change their course.

The choices college and university leaders make in the next five to ten years will have long-term implications for the competitiveness and financial health of their institutions. Those at-risk institutions that are able to move quickly will be best positioned to differentiate themselves and carve out a niche in the increasingly competitive market.





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# A CALL TO ACTION FOR HIGHER ED LEADERS

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*“The Future? The things that got us here will not get us there.”*

-Peter Drucker

As the financial and market sustainability of our nation’s institutions slowly erodes, institutions must heed the warning signs and take appropriate and immediate action. This is especially true for institutions without clear and compelling pricing or other competitive advantages.

Yet there are no simple or obvious answers to the challenges facing these institutions. Improving quality while reducing costs, creating new models for delivering education, and aligning organizational structures and incentives are the types of challenges Ron Heifetz, co-author of *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, characterizes as adaptive in nature, as opposed to technical, because we don’t have the solutions in our immediate capacity.

Adaptive challenges require ongoing experimentation, creativity, risk-taking, and a tolerance for trial and error. More profoundly, they require that leaders question long-held assumptions and engage the talent throughout their institution in identifying opportunities to adapt to a changing environment. This will not happen overnight; Heifetz teaches us that adaptive challenges are characterized by their lengthy timeframe, so that the challenge for institutional leaders is to “keep people in the game” during a period of “sustained disequilibrium.”

If these institutions are to thrive in the years ahead, college and university leaders must begin to move their campuses to action by:

- Focusing on factors that can be controlled.
- Defining the right problems to solve.
- Challenging long-standing assumptions that limit innovation and bold action.

## FOCUSING ON WHAT'S WITHIN YOUR CONTROL

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To ensure that your institution remains competitive and takes a stronger position in the next five to ten years, it is critical to look at these challenges holistically. It has proven too tempting to isolate and lament some parts of the picture that are outside of higher ed's control—such as declines in state and federal funds for higher education—rather than identify and act boldly to address those issues that are within higher ed's control.

Institution expansion continues to outpace revenues, and so tuition has continued to increase, on average, at 3.5 times the rate of inflation for four-year public institutions and 2.6 for four-year private, nonprofit institutions over the last few decades. The current financial state of institutions is a product of many years of unsustainable decision making.

The brainpower needed to confront these issues already exists among an institution's faculty and staff, its trustees, and the donors and community or business partners who can bring an external perspective to bear. It's up to institutional leaders to harness this brainpower by engaging and empowering their stakeholders.

Leaders need to hold honest conversations with internal stakeholders—conversations that:

- Recognize the external realities—demographics, regulation, state funding, technology—and then use these data to inform their strategic plans.
- Focus on those factors that the institution can control—such as faculty teaching loads; which programs to invest in and which ones to eliminate or restructure; and the efficiency of administrative services.

Then, institutional leaders need to use these conversations as opportunities to invite stakeholders across the institution to think innovatively and to address the difficult questions: who they are and who they are not; what they will invest in and what they *won't* invest in; what differentiates



*“Your question, ‘Why assume that salaries are a permanent cost or a given?’ gets at the heart of the conversation that has to happen. We need to ask: What really are the ‘givens,’ and why?”*

-Pat Sanaghan  
The Sanaghan Group

*“Institutions have been too focused on finding more revenues, as opposed to investing and cost management—the deeper understanding of cost and determining which costs can be eliminated and which must be accommodated. There’s this whole attitude in higher ed and I’ve seen it over thirty-five years. Every problem gets addressed with finding more revenue, not examining, ‘Do we need to spend this money?’”*

-Larry Goldstein  
Campus Strategies, LLC



their institution; and how to generate the resources necessary to support their mission-critical activities.

It is the answers to these questions that will set the institution on a path toward financial and mission sustainability and a more competitive future.

## DEFINING THE RIGHT PROBLEMS

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When I attend conferences, I frequently hear participants discuss issues in a very narrow context. For example, when we're talking about unexpected drops in enrollment, the immediate blame goes to the economy, declining demographics, or poor marketing strategies. Little attention is paid to academic quality, scope of offerings, pricing and perceived value, or how enrollment targets are set in the first place, etc. If institutions aren't defining the problem correctly, their solutions will remain limited in their effectiveness.

The problem is that enrollment drops—especially recurring declines—are probably not *exclusively* a marketing or admissions problem.

More likely, these drops have to do with the perceived value of the institution—price for quality. Institutions exist in a competitive marketplace and there are a variety of alternatives. If institutions are losing market share, it's likely because more formidable competitors (rather than more formidable *marketers*) are taking it.

Institutions rarely diagnose problems holistically. Thus, enrollment managers don't often have a seat at the table when new or existing programs are being evaluated. Yet, in no other sector do you find large organizations that operate in this way—organizations at which “product development” doesn't speak to and interact closely with marketing.

Here's another example. Most often, the many development officers working for an institution are incentivized to spend as little time on campus as possible. This prevents development officers from forming meaningful relationships with faculty and researchers—those who are leading the efforts for which money is being raised. Yet, these relationships can be key to ensuring that development officers find the right donors, those with not only the ability but also the willingness to support the

institution. These relationships are also key to ensuring that when funds are raised, they are raised in support of the most mission-critical programs and efforts, those which advance the academic enterprise.

## CHALLENGING LONG-STANDING ASSUMPTIONS

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What holds institutional leaders back from making truly innovative changes appears to be the notion that certain goals or desired outcomes are mutually exclusive. For example:

- Faculty are often disparaged by administrators who don't believe they know anything about the "business" of higher ed.
- Conversely, faculty resist input from administrators and seek autonomy for their programs, relying on an overly broad interpretation of "academic freedom."

Why must these pursuits—the academic enterprise and the "business" of higher education—be mutually exclusive?

*“Faculty [should be] responsible for the whole program... retention within their program, the graduation within their program, [and] the cost of their program...And it’s going to take some really...courageous leadership to get faculty to really understand that it is their role to have an eye to all those aspects of their program.”*

-Carol Moore,  
Past President, Lyndon State College



## RETHINKING “PRIZED FEATURES”

Institutions must also rethink the longstanding assumptions of what drives educational quality:

- Professors who don't just teach but also conduct research
- Smaller class sizes
- Faculty with tenure

These prized “features” of higher education also drive up the cost. What are those innovations that will drive up quality and reduce costs?

Consider:

- Can an institution be responsive to market demand and still steadfastly pursue its mission?
- Can an institution be service-oriented without compromising its academic integrity?
- Can an institution prize and prioritize quality while still managing costs in a sustainable way?
- Can an institution have a strong liberal core and still produce employable students with strong vocational outcomes?

***The answer is and must be yes.***

# LOOKING FORWARD

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At-risk institutions simply cannot afford to operate under the same constraints and assumptions that have guided decision making at these institutions for the past few decades. Nor can higher-ed leaders afford to rely on hypothetical future increases in external funding—whether from state, tuition, or philanthropic sources. Change has to come now—and it has to come from within the institution—by managing those outcomes and costs that are within the institution’s control.

At Academic Impressions, we encourage you to foster an institutional culture in which passionate and talented faculty and administrators can innovate and experiment, make mistakes, and learn from them to advance your institution. We encourage you to begin the difficult but necessary conversations, and to begin now. And we look forward to helping you navigate the risks and opportunities of the future.

We’ve offered a fresh diagnosis of the most urgent challenge facing the higher-ed industry.

In upcoming whitepapers, Academic Impressions will help you examine the specific risks and opportunities facing higher education by presenting new data and holding conversations with key leaders in the higher-ed industry.

Watch for upcoming papers from Academic Impressions that will address:

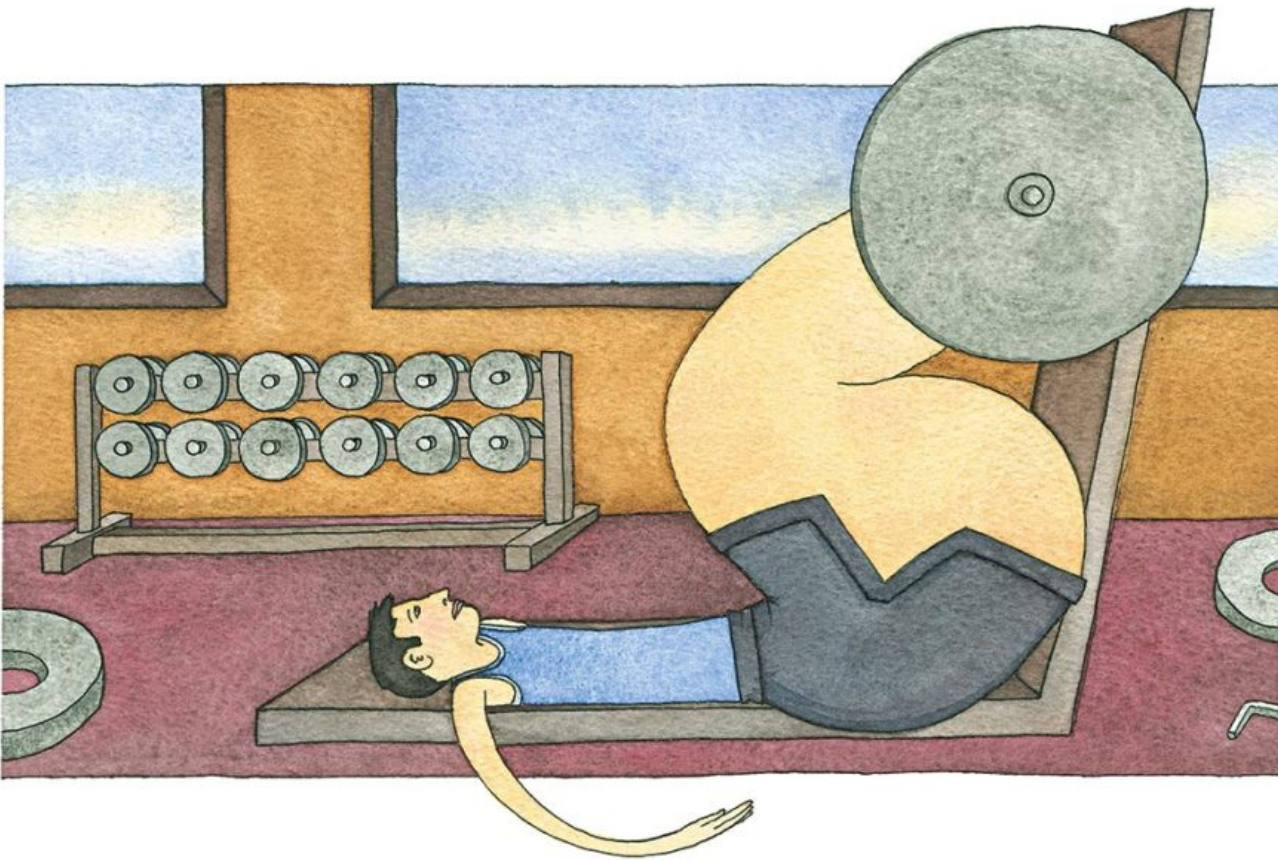
- Financial decision making and accountability.
- Aligning organizational structures and incentives.
- Innovations that reduce costs and improve quality.
- Defining a differentiated student experience.
- Examining higher-ed governance.



# Managing Oneself

by Peter F. Drucker

FROM THE JANUARY 2005 ISSUE



We live in an age of unprecedented opportunity: If you've got ambition and smarts, you can rise to the top of your chosen profession, regardless of where you started out.

But with opportunity comes responsibility. Companies today aren't managing their employees' careers; knowledge workers must, effectively, be their own chief executive officers. It's up to you to carve out your place, to know when to change course, and to keep yourself engaged and productive during a work life that may span some 50 years. To do those

things well, you'll need to cultivate a deep understanding of yourself—not only what your strengths and weaknesses are but also how you learn, how you work with others, what your values are, and where you can make the greatest contribution. Because only when you operate from strengths can you achieve true excellence.

History's great achievers—a Napoléon, a da Vinci, a Mozart—have always managed themselves. That, in large measure, is what makes them great achievers. But they are rare exceptions, so unusual both in their talents and their accomplishments as to be considered outside the boundaries of ordinary human existence. Now, most of us, even those of us with modest endowments, will have to learn to manage ourselves. We will have to learn to develop ourselves. We will have to place ourselves where we can make the greatest contribution. And we will have to stay mentally alert and engaged during a 50-year working life, which means knowing how and when to change the work we do.

## **What Are My Strengths?**

Most people think they know what they are good at. They are usually wrong. More often, people know what they are not good at—and even then more people are wrong than right. And yet, a person can perform only from strength. One cannot build performance on weaknesses, let alone on something one cannot do at all.

Throughout history, people had little need to know their strengths. A person was born into a position and a line of work: The peasant's son would also be a peasant; the artisan's daughter, an artisan's wife; and so on. But now people have choices. We need to know our strengths in order to know where we belong.

The only way to discover your strengths is through feedback analysis. Whenever you make a key decision or take a key action, write down what you expect will happen. Nine or 12 months later, compare the actual results with your expectations. I have been practicing this method for 15 to 20 years now, and every time I do it, I am surprised. The feedback analysis showed

me, for instance—and to my great surprise—that I have an intuitive understanding of technical people, whether they are engineers or accountants or market researchers. It also showed me that I don't really resonate with generalists.

Feedback analysis is by no means new. It was invented sometime in the fourteenth century by an otherwise totally obscure German theologian and picked up quite independently, some 150 years later, by John Calvin and Ignatius of Loyola, each of whom incorporated it into the practice of his followers. In fact, the steadfast focus on performance and results that this habit produces explains why the institutions these two men founded, the Calvinist church and the Jesuit order, came to dominate Europe within 30 years.

Practiced consistently, this simple method will show you within a fairly short period of time, maybe two or three years, where your strengths lie—and this is the most important thing to know. The method will show you what you are doing or failing to do that deprives you of the full benefits of your strengths. It will show you where you are not particularly competent. And finally, it will show you where you have no strengths and cannot perform.

Several implications for action follow from feedback analysis. First and foremost, concentrate on your strengths. Put yourself where your strengths can produce results.

Second, work on improving your strengths. Analysis will rapidly show where you need to improve skills or acquire new ones. It will also show the gaps in your knowledge—and those can usually be filled. Mathematicians are born, but everyone can learn trigonometry.

Third, discover where your intellectual arrogance is causing disabling ignorance and overcome it. Far too many people—especially people with great expertise in one area—are contemptuous of knowledge in other areas or believe that being bright is a substitute for knowledge. First-rate engineers, for instance, tend to take pride in not knowing anything about people. Human beings, they believe, are much too disorderly for the good engineering mind. Human resources professionals, by contrast, often pride themselves on their ignorance

of elementary accounting or of quantitative methods altogether. But taking pride in such ignorance is self-defeating. Go to work on acquiring the skills and knowledge you need to fully realize your strengths.

It is equally essential to remedy your bad habits—the things you do or fail to do that inhibit your effectiveness and performance. Such habits will quickly show up in the feedback. For example, a planner may find that his beautiful plans fail because he does not follow through on them. Like so many brilliant people, he believes that ideas move mountains. But bulldozers move mountains; ideas show where the bulldozers should go to work. This planner will have to learn that the work does not stop when the plan is completed. He must find people to carry out the plan and explain it to them. He must adapt and change it as he puts it into action. And finally, he must decide when to stop pushing the plan.

At the same time, feedback will also reveal when the problem is a lack of manners. Manners are the lubricating oil of an organization. It is a law of nature that two moving bodies in contact with each other create friction. This is as true for human beings as it is for inanimate objects. Manners—simple things like saying “please” and “thank you” and knowing a person’s name or asking after her family—enable two people to work together whether they like each other or not. Bright people, especially bright young people, often do not understand this. If analysis shows that someone’s brilliant work fails again and again as soon as cooperation from others is required, it probably indicates a lack of courtesy—that is, a lack of manners.

Comparing your expectations with your results also indicates what not to do. We all have a vast number of areas in which we have no talent or skill and little chance of becoming even mediocre. In those areas a person—and especially a knowledge worker—should not take on work, jobs, and assignments. One should waste as little effort as possible on improving areas of low competence. It takes far more energy and work to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence. And yet most people—especially most teachers and most organizations—concentrate on making incompetent performers into mediocre ones. Energy, resources, and time should go instead to making a competent person into a star performer.

It takes far more energy to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than to improve from first-rate performance to excellence.

## **How Do I Perform?**

Amazingly few people know how they get things done. Indeed, most of us do not even know that different people work and perform differently. Too many people work in ways that are not their ways, and that almost guarantees nonperformance. For knowledge workers, How do I perform? may be an even more important question than What are my strengths?

Like one's strengths, how one performs is unique. It is a matter of personality. Whether personality be a matter of nature or nurture, it surely is formed long before a person goes to work. And *how* a person performs is a given, just as *what* a person is good at or not good at is a given. A person's way of performing can be slightly modified, but it is unlikely to be completely changed—and certainly not easily. Just as people achieve results by doing what they are good at, they also achieve results by working in ways that they best perform. A few common personality traits usually determine how a person performs.

## **Am I a reader or a listener?**

The first thing to know is whether you are a reader or a listener. Far too few people even know that there are readers and listeners and that people are rarely both. Even fewer know which of the two they themselves are. But some examples will show how damaging such ignorance can be.

When Dwight Eisenhower was Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in Europe, he was the darling of the press. His press conferences were famous for their style—General Eisenhower showed total command of whatever question he was asked, and he was able to describe a situation and explain a policy in two or three beautifully polished and elegant sentences. Ten years later, the same journalists who had been his admirers held President

Eisenhower in open contempt. He never addressed the questions, they complained, but rambled on endlessly about something else. And they constantly ridiculed him for butchering the King's English in incoherent and ungrammatical answers.

Eisenhower apparently did not know that he was a reader, not a listener. When he was Supreme Commander in Europe, his aides made sure that every question from the press was presented in writing at least half an hour before a conference was to begin. And then Eisenhower was in total command. When he became president, he succeeded two listeners, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman. Both men knew themselves to be listeners and both enjoyed free-for-all press conferences. Eisenhower may have felt that he had to do what his two predecessors had done. As a result, he never even heard the questions journalists asked. And Eisenhower is not even an extreme case of a nonlistener.

A few years later, Lyndon Johnson destroyed his presidency, in large measure, by not knowing that he was a listener. His predecessor, John Kennedy, was a reader who had assembled a brilliant group of writers as his assistants, making sure that they wrote to him before discussing their memos in person. Johnson kept these people on his staff—and they kept on writing. He never, apparently, understood one word of what they wrote. Yet as a senator, Johnson had been superb; for parliamentarians have to be, above all, listeners.

Few listeners can be made, or can make themselves, into competent readers—and vice versa. The listener who tries to be a reader will, therefore, suffer the fate of Lyndon Johnson, whereas the reader who tries to be a listener will suffer the fate of Dwight Eisenhower. They will not perform or achieve.

### **How do I learn?**

The second thing to know about how one performs is to know how one learns. Many first-class writers—Winston Churchill is but one example—do poorly in school. They tend to remember their schooling as pure torture. Yet few of their classmates remember it the same way. They may not have enjoyed the school very much, but the worst they suffered was

boredom. The explanation is that writers do not, as a rule, learn by listening and reading. They learn by writing. Because schools do not allow them to learn this way, they get poor grades.

Schools everywhere are organized on the assumption that there is only one right way to learn and that it is the same way for everybody. But to be forced to learn the way a school teaches is sheer hell for students who learn differently. Indeed, there are probably half a dozen different ways to learn.

There are people, like Churchill, who learn by writing. Some people learn by taking copious notes. Beethoven, for example, left behind an enormous number of sketchbooks, yet he said he never actually looked at them when he composed. Asked why he kept them, he is reported to have replied, “If I don’t write it down immediately, I forget it right away. If I put it into a sketchbook, I never forget it and I never have to look it up again.” Some people learn by doing. Others learn by hearing themselves talk.

A chief executive I know who converted a small and mediocre family business into the leading company in its industry was one of those people who learn by talking. He was in the habit of calling his entire senior staff into his office once a week and then talking at them for two or three hours. He would raise policy issues and argue three different positions on each one. He rarely asked his associates for comments or questions; he simply needed an audience to hear himself talk. That’s how he learned. And although he is a fairly extreme case, learning through talking is by no means an unusual method. Successful trial lawyers learn the same way, as do many medical diagnosticians (and so do I).

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#### FURTHER READING

### What Would Peter Say?

LEADERSHIP FEATURE by Rosabeth Moss Kanter

If he were still alive, his first comment might be, “I told you so.”

Of all the important pieces of self-knowledge, understanding how you learn is the easiest to acquire. When I ask people, “How do you learn?” most of them know the answer. But when I ask, “Do you act on this knowledge?”



few answer yes. And yet, acting on this knowledge is the key to performance; or rather, *not* acting on this knowledge condemns one to nonperformance.

Am I a reader or a listener? and How do I learn? are the first questions to ask. But they are by no means the only ones. To manage yourself effectively, you also have to ask, Do I work well with people, or am I a loner? And if you do work well with people, you then must ask, In what relationship?

Some people work best as subordinates. General George Patton, the great American military hero of World War II, is a prime example. Patton was America's top troop commander. Yet when he was proposed for an independent command, General George Marshall, the U.S. chief of staff—and probably the most successful picker of men in U.S. history—said, “Patton is the best subordinate the American army has ever produced, but he would be the worst commander.”

Some people work best as team members. Others work best alone. Some are exceptionally talented as coaches and mentors; others are simply incompetent as mentors.

Another crucial question is, Do I produce results as a decision maker or as an adviser? A great many people perform best as advisers but cannot take the burden and pressure of making the decision. A good many other people, by contrast, need an adviser to force themselves to think; then they can make decisions and act on them with speed, self-confidence, and courage.

This is a reason, by the way, that the number two person in an organization often fails when promoted to the number one position. The top spot requires a decision maker. Strong decision makers often put somebody they trust into the number two spot as their adviser—and in that position the person is outstanding. But in the number one spot, the same person fails. He or she knows what the decision should be but cannot accept the responsibility of actually making it.

Other important questions to ask include, Do I perform well under stress, or do I need a highly structured and predictable environment? Do I work best in a big organization or a small one? Few people work well in all kinds of environments. Again and again, I have seen people who were very successful in large organizations flounder miserably when they moved into smaller ones. And the reverse is equally true.

The conclusion bears repeating: Do not try to change yourself—you are unlikely to succeed. But work hard to improve the way you perform. And try not to take on work you cannot perform or will only perform poorly.

Do not try to change yourself—you are unlikely to succeed. Work to improve the way you perform.

## **What Are My Values?**

To be able to manage yourself, you finally have to ask, What are my values? This is not a question of ethics. With respect to ethics, the rules are the same for everybody, and the test is a simple one. I call it the “mirror test.”

In the early years of this century, the most highly respected diplomat of all the great powers was the German ambassador in London. He was clearly destined for great things—to become his country’s foreign minister, at least, if not its federal chancellor. Yet in 1906 he abruptly resigned rather than preside over a dinner given by the diplomatic corps for Edward VII. The king was a notorious womanizer and made it clear what kind of dinner he wanted. The ambassador is reported to have said, “I refuse to see a pimp in the mirror in the morning when I shave.”

That is the mirror test. Ethics requires that you ask yourself, What kind of person do I want to see in the mirror in the morning? What is ethical behavior in one kind of organization or situation is ethical behavior in another. But ethics is only part of a value system—especially of

an organization's value system.

To work in an organization whose value system is unacceptable or incompatible with one's own condemns a person both to frustration and to nonperformance.

Consider the experience of a highly successful human resources executive whose company was acquired by a bigger organization. After the acquisition, she was promoted to do the kind of work she did best, which included selecting people for important positions. The executive deeply believed that a company should hire people for such positions from the outside only after exhausting all the inside possibilities. But her new company believed in first looking outside "to bring in fresh blood." There is something to be said for both approaches—in my experience, the proper one is to do some of both. They are, however, fundamentally incompatible—not as policies but as values. They bespeak different views of the relationship between organizations and people; different views of the responsibility of an organization to its people and their development; and different views of a person's most important contribution to an enterprise. After several years of frustration, the executive quit—at considerable financial loss. Her values and the values of the organization simply were not compatible.

Similarly, whether a pharmaceutical company tries to obtain results by making constant, small improvements or by achieving occasional, highly expensive, and risky "breakthroughs" is not primarily an economic question. The results of either strategy may be pretty much the same. At bottom, there is a conflict between a value system that sees the company's contribution in terms of helping physicians do better what they already do and a value system that is oriented toward making scientific discoveries.

Whether a business should be run for short-term results or with a focus on the long term is likewise a question of values. Financial analysts believe that businesses can be run for both simultaneously. Successful businesspeople know better. To be sure, every company has to produce short-term results. But in any conflict between short-term results and long-term

growth, each company will determine its own priority. This is not primarily a disagreement about economics. It is fundamentally a value conflict regarding the function of a business and the responsibility of management.

Value conflicts are not limited to business organizations. One of the fastest-growing pastoral churches in the United States measures success by the number of new parishioners. Its leadership believes that what matters is how many newcomers join the congregation. The Good Lord will then minister to their spiritual needs or at least to the needs of a sufficient percentage. Another pastoral, evangelical church believes that what matters is people's spiritual growth. The church eases out newcomers who join but do not enter into its spiritual life.

Again, this is not a matter of numbers. At first glance, it appears that the second church grows more slowly. But it retains a far larger proportion of newcomers than the first one does. Its growth, in other words, is more solid. This is also not a theological problem, or only secondarily so. It is a problem about values. In a public debate, one pastor argued, "Unless you first come to church, you will never find the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven."

"No," answered the other. "Until you first look for the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven, you don't belong in church."

Organizations, like people, have values. To be effective in an organization, a person's values must be compatible with the organization's values. They do not need to be the same, but they must be close enough to coexist. Otherwise, the person will not only be frustrated but also will not produce results.

A person's strengths and the way that person performs rarely conflict; the two are complementary. But there is sometimes a conflict between a person's values and his or her strengths. What one does well—even very well and successfully—may not fit with one's value system. In that case, the work may not appear to be worth devoting one's life to (or even a substantial portion thereof).

What one does well—even very well and successfully—may not fit with one’s value system.

If I may, allow me to interject a personal note. Many years ago, I too had to decide between my values and what I was doing successfully. I was doing very well as a young investment banker in London in the mid-1930s, and the work clearly fit my strengths. Yet I did not see myself making a contribution as an asset manager. People, I realized, were what I valued, and I saw no point in being the richest man in the cemetery. I had no money and no other job prospects. Despite the continuing Depression, I quit—and it was the right thing to do. Values, in other words, are and should be the ultimate test.

## **Where Do I Belong?**

A small number of people know very early where they belong. Mathematicians, musicians, and cooks, for instance, are usually mathematicians, musicians, and cooks by the time they are four or five years old. Physicians usually decide on their careers in their teens, if not earlier. But most people, especially highly gifted people, do not really know where they belong until they are well past their mid-twenties. By that time, however, they should know the answers to the three questions: What are my strengths? How do I perform? and, What are my values? And then they can and should decide where they belong.

Or rather, they should be able to decide where they do *not* belong. The person who has learned that he or she does not perform well in a big organization should have learned to say no to a position in one. The person who has learned that he or she is not a decision maker should have learned to say no to a decision-making assignment. A General Patton (who probably never learned this himself) should have learned to say no to an independent command.

Equally important, knowing the answer to these questions enables a person to say to an opportunity, an offer, or an assignment, “Yes, I will do that. But this is the way I should be doing it. This is the way it should be structured. This is the way the relationships should be. These are the kind of results you should expect from me, and in this time frame, because this is who I am.”

Successful careers are not planned. They develop when people are prepared for opportunities because they know their strengths, their method of work, and their values. Knowing where one belongs can transform an ordinary person—hardworking and competent but otherwise mediocre—into an outstanding performer.

## What Should I Contribute?

Throughout history, the great majority of people never had to ask the question, What should I contribute? They were told what to contribute, and their tasks were dictated either by the work itself—as it was for the peasant or artisan—or by a master or a mistress—as it was for domestic servants. And until very recently, it was taken for granted that most people were subordinates who did as they were told. Even in the 1950s and 1960s, the new knowledge workers (the so-called organization men) looked to their company’s personnel department to plan their careers.



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### FURTHER READING

#### Why Read Peter Drucker?

BUSINESS HISTORY FEATURE by Alan Kantrow

Because of how his mind worked.

 SAVE  SHARE

men’s had been. Very few of the people who believed that doing one’s own thing would lead to contribution, self-fulfillment, and success achieved any of the three.

Then in the late 1960s, no one wanted to be told what to do any longer. Young men and women began to ask, What do *I* want to do? And what they heard was that the way to contribute was to “do your own thing.” But this solution was as wrong as the organization

But still, there is no return to the old answer of doing what you are told or assigned to do. Knowledge workers in particular have to learn to ask a question that has not been asked before: What *should* my contribution be? To answer it, they must address three distinct elements: What does the situation require? Given my strengths, my way of performing, and my values, how can I make the greatest contribution to what needs to be done? And finally, What results have to be achieved to make a difference?

Consider the experience of a newly appointed hospital administrator. The hospital was big and prestigious, but it had been coasting on its reputation for 30 years. The new administrator decided that his contribution should be to establish a standard of excellence in one important area within two years. He chose to focus on the emergency room, which was big, visible, and sloppy. He decided that every patient who came into the ER had to be seen by a qualified nurse within 60 seconds. Within 12 months, the hospital's emergency room had become a model for all hospitals in the United States, and within another two years, the whole hospital had been transformed.

As this example suggests, it is rarely possible—or even particularly fruitful—to look too far ahead. A plan can usually cover no more than 18 months and still be reasonably clear and specific. So the question in most cases should be, Where and how can I achieve results that will make a difference within the next year and a half? The answer must balance several things. First, the results should be hard to achieve—they should require “stretching,” to use the current buzzword. But also, they should be within reach. To aim at results that cannot be achieved—or that can be only under the most unlikely circumstances—is not being ambitious; it is being foolish. Second, the results should be meaningful. They should make a difference. Finally, results should be visible and, if at all possible, measurable. From this will come a course of action: what to do, where and how to start, and what goals and deadlines to set.

## **Responsibility for Relationships**

Very few people work by themselves and achieve results by themselves—a few great artists, a few great scientists, a few great athletes. Most people work with others and are effective with other people. That is true whether they are members of an organization or independently



employed. Managing yourself requires taking responsibility for relationships. This has two parts.

The first is to accept the fact that other people are as much individuals as you yourself are. They perversely insist on behaving like human beings. This means that they too have their strengths; they too have their ways of getting things done; they too have their values. To be effective, therefore, you have to know the strengths, the performance modes, and the values of your coworkers.

That sounds obvious, but few people pay attention to it. Typical is the person who was trained to write reports in his or her first assignment because that boss was a reader. Even if the next boss is a listener, the person goes on writing reports that, invariably, produce no results. Invariably the boss will think the employee is stupid, incompetent, and lazy, and he or she will fail. But that could have been avoided if the employee had only looked at the new boss and analyzed how *this* boss performs.

Bosses are neither a title on the organization chart nor a “function.” They are individuals and are entitled to do their work in the way they do it best. It is incumbent on the people who work with them to observe them, to find out how they work, and to adapt themselves to what makes their bosses most effective. This, in fact, is the secret of “managing” the boss.

The same holds true for all your coworkers. Each works his or her way, not your way. And each is entitled to work in his or her way. What matters is whether they perform and what their values are. As for how they perform—each is likely to do it differently. The first secret of effectiveness is to understand the people you work with and depend on so that you can make use of their strengths, their ways of working, and their values. Working relationships are as much based on the people as they are on the work.

The first secret of effectiveness is to understand the people you work with so that you can make use of their strengths.

The second part of relationship responsibility is taking responsibility for communication. Whenever I, or any other consultant, start to work with an organization, the first thing I hear about are all the personality conflicts. Most of these arise from the fact that people do not know what other people are doing and how they do their work, or what contribution the other people are concentrating on and what results they expect. And the reason they do not know is that they have not asked and therefore have not been told.

This failure to ask reflects human stupidity less than it reflects human history. Until recently, it was unnecessary to tell any of these things to anybody. In the medieval city, everyone in a district plied the same trade. In the countryside, everyone in a valley planted the same crop as soon as the frost was out of the ground. Even those few people who did things that were not “common” worked alone, so they did not have to tell anyone what they were doing.

Today the great majority of people work with others who have different tasks and responsibilities. The marketing vice president may have come out of sales and know everything about sales, but she knows nothing about the things she has never done—pricing, advertising, packaging, and the like. So the people who do these things must make sure that the marketing vice president understands what they are trying to do, why they are trying to do it, how they are going to do it, and what results to expect.

If the marketing vice president does not understand what these high-grade knowledge specialists are doing, it is primarily their fault, not hers. They have not educated her. Conversely, it is the marketing vice president’s responsibility to make sure that all of her coworkers understand how she looks at marketing: what her goals are, how she works, and what she expects of herself and of each one of them.

Even people who understand the importance of taking responsibility for relationships often do not communicate sufficiently with their associates. They are afraid of being thought presumptuous or inquisitive or stupid. They are wrong. Whenever someone goes to his or her

associates and says, “This is what I am good at. This is how I work. These are my values. This is the contribution I plan to concentrate on and the results I should be expected to deliver,” the response is always, “This is most helpful. But why didn’t you tell me earlier?”

And one gets the same reaction—without exception, in my experience—if one continues by asking, “And what do I need to know about your strengths, how you perform, your values, and your proposed contribution?” In fact, knowledge workers should request this of everyone with whom they work, whether as subordinate, superior, colleague, or team member. And again, whenever this is done, the reaction is always, “Thanks for asking me. But why didn’t you ask me earlier?”

Organizations are no longer built on force but on trust. The existence of trust between people does not necessarily mean that they like one another. It means that they understand one another. Taking responsibility for relationships is therefore an absolute necessity. It is a duty. Whether one is a member of the organization, a consultant to it, a supplier, or a distributor, one owes that responsibility to all one’s coworkers: those whose work one depends on as well as those who depend on one’s own work.

## **The Second Half of Your Life**

When work for most people meant manual labor, there was no need to worry about the second half of your life. You simply kept on doing what you had always done. And if you were lucky enough to survive 40 years of hard work in the mill or on the railroad, you were quite happy to spend the rest of your life doing nothing. Today, however, most work is knowledge work, and knowledge workers are not “finished” after 40 years on the job, they are merely bored.

We hear a great deal of talk about the midlife crisis of the executive. It is mostly boredom. At 45, most executives have reached the peak of their business careers, and they know it. After 20 years of doing very much the same kind of work, they are very good at their jobs. But they

are not learning or contributing or deriving challenge and satisfaction from the job. And yet they are still likely to face another 20 if not 25 years of work. That is why managing oneself increasingly leads one to begin a second career.

There are three ways to develop a second career. The first is actually to start one. Often this takes nothing more than moving from one kind of organization to another: the divisional controller in a large corporation, for instance, becomes the controller of a medium-sized hospital. But there are also growing numbers of people who move into different lines of work altogether: the business executive or government official who enters the ministry at 45, for instance; or the midlevel manager who leaves corporate life after 20 years to attend law school and become a small-town attorney.

We will see many more second careers undertaken by people who have achieved modest success in their first jobs. Such people have substantial skills, and they know how to work. They need a community—the house is empty with the children gone—and they need income as well. But above all, they need challenge.

The second way to prepare for the second half of your life is to develop a parallel career. Many people who are very successful in their first careers stay in the work they have been doing, either on a full-time or part-time or consulting basis. But in addition, they create a parallel job, usually in a nonprofit organization, that takes another ten hours of work a week. They might take over the administration of their church, for instance, or the presidency of the local Girl Scouts council. They might run the battered women's shelter, work as a children's librarian for the local public library, sit on the school board, and so on.

Finally, there are the social entrepreneurs. These are usually people who have been very successful in their first careers. They love their work, but it no longer challenges them. In many cases they keep on doing what they have been doing all along but spend less and less of their time on it. They also start another activity, usually a nonprofit. My friend Bob Buford, for example, built a very successful television company that he still runs. But he has also founded

and built a successful nonprofit organization that works with Protestant churches, and he is building another to teach social entrepreneurs how to manage their own nonprofit ventures while still running their original businesses.

People who manage the second half of their lives may always be a minority. The majority may “retire on the job” and count the years until their actual retirement. But it is this minority, the men and women who see a long working-life expectancy as an opportunity both for themselves and for society, who will become leaders and models.

There is one prerequisite for managing the second half of your life: You must begin long before you enter it. When it first became clear 30 years ago that working-life expectancies were lengthening very fast, many observers (including myself) believed that retired people would increasingly become volunteers for nonprofit institutions. That has not happened. If one does not begin to volunteer before one is 40 or so, one will not volunteer once past 60.

There is one prerequisite for managing the second half of your life: You must begin doing so long before you enter it.

Similarly, all the social entrepreneurs I know began to work in their chosen second enterprise long before they reached their peak in their original business. Consider the example of a successful lawyer, the legal counsel to a large corporation, who has started a venture to establish model schools in his state. He began to do volunteer legal work for the schools when he was around 35. He was elected to the school board at age 40. At age 50, when he had amassed a fortune, he started his own enterprise to build and to run model schools. He is, however, still working nearly full-time as the lead counsel in the company he helped found as a young lawyer.

There is another reason to develop a second major interest, and to develop it early. No one can expect to live very long without experiencing a serious setback in his or her life or work. There is the competent engineer who is passed over for promotion at age 45. There is the competent

college professor who realizes at age 42 that she will never get a professorship at a big university, even though she may be fully qualified for it. There are tragedies in one's family life: the breakup of one's marriage or the loss of a child. At such times, a second major interest—not just a hobby—may make all the difference. The engineer, for example, now knows that he has not been very successful in his job. But in his outside activity—as church treasurer, for example—he is a success. One's family may break up, but in that outside activity there is still a community.

In a society in which success has become so terribly important, having options will become increasingly vital. Historically, there was no such thing as “success.” The overwhelming majority of people did not expect anything but to stay in their “proper station,” as an old English prayer has it. The only mobility was downward mobility.

In a knowledge society, however, we expect everyone to be a success. This is clearly an impossibility. For a great many people, there is at best an absence of failure. Wherever there is success, there has to be failure. And then it is vitally important for the individual, and equally for the individual's family, to have an area in which he or she can contribute, make a difference, and be *somebody*. That means finding a second area—whether in a second career, a parallel career, or a social venture—that offers an opportunity for being a leader, for being respected, for being a success.

The challenges of managing oneself may seem obvious, if not elementary. And the answers may seem self-evident to the point of appearing naïve. But managing oneself requires new and unprecedented things from the individual, and especially from the knowledge worker. In effect, managing oneself demands that each knowledge worker think and behave like a chief executive officer. Further, the shift from manual workers who do as they are told to knowledge workers who have to manage themselves profoundly challenges social structure. Every existing society, even the most individualistic one, takes two things for granted, if only subconsciously: that organizations outlive workers, and that most people stay put.

But today the opposite is true. Knowledge workers outlive organizations, and they are mobile. The need to manage oneself is therefore creating a revolution in human affairs.

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## This article is about **MANAGING YOURSELF**

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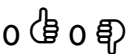
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MANAGING PEOPLE

# What Great Managers Do

by Marcus Buckingham

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“The best boss I ever had.” That’s a phrase most of us have said or heard at some point, but what does it mean? What sets the great boss apart from the average boss? The literature is rife with provocative writing about the qualities of managers and leaders and whether the two differ, but little has been said about what happens in the thousands of daily interactions and decisions that allows managers to get the best out of their people and win their devotion. What do great managers actually *do*?

In my research, beginning with a survey of 80,000 managers conducted by the Gallup Organization and continuing during the past two years with in-depth studies of a few top performers, I’ve found that while there are as many styles of management as there are managers, there is one quality that sets truly great managers apart from the rest: They discover what is unique about each person and then capitalize on it. Average managers play checkers, while great managers play chess. The difference? In checkers, all the pieces are uniform and move in the same way; they are interchangeable. You need to plan and coordinate their movements, certainly, but they all move at the same pace, on parallel paths. In chess, each type of piece moves in a different way, and you can’t play if you don’t know how each piece moves. More important, you won’t win if you don’t think carefully about how you move the pieces. Great managers know and value the unique abilities and even the eccentricities of their employees, and they learn how best to integrate them into a coordinated plan of attack.

## The Research

To gather the raw material for my book *The One Thing You Need to Know: About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success*, from which this article has been adapted, I chose an approach that is rather different from the one I used for my previous books. For 17 years, I had the good fortune to work with the Gallup Organization, one of the most respected research firms in the world. During that time, I was given the opportunity to interview some of the world’s best leaders, managers, teachers, salespeople, stockbrokers, lawyers, and public servants. These interviews were a part of large-scale studies that involved surveying groups of people in the hopes of finding broad patterns in the data. For my book, I used this foundation as the jumping-off point for deeper, more individualized research.

In each of the three areas targeted in the book—managing, leading, and sustained individual success—I first identified one or two people in various roles and fields who had measurably, consistently, and dramatically outperformed their peers. These individuals included Myrtle Potter, president of commercial operations for Genentech, who transformed a failing drug into the highest selling prescription drug in the world; Sir Terry Leahy, the president of the European retailing giant Tesco; Manjit, the customer service representative from Jim Kawashima’s top-performing Walgreens store in San Jose, California, who sold more than 1,600 units of Gillette deodorant in one month; and David Koepp, the prolific screenwriter who penned such blockbusters as *Jurassic Park*, *Mission: Impossible*, and *Spider-Man*.

What interested me about these high achievers was the practical, seemingly banal details of their actions and their choices. Why did Myrtle Potter repeatedly turn down promotions before taking on the challenge of turning around that failing drug? Why did Terry Leahy rely

This is the exact opposite of what great leaders do. Great leaders discover what is universal and capitalize on it. Their job is to rally people toward a better future. Leaders can succeed in this only when they can cut through differences of race, sex, age, nationality, and personality and, using stories and celebrating heroes, tap into those very few needs we all share. The job of a manager, meanwhile, is to turn one person’s particular talent into performance. Managers will succeed only when they can identify and deploy the differences among people, challenging each employee to excel in his or her own way. This doesn’t mean a leader can’t be a manager or vice versa. But to excel at one or both, you must be aware of the very different skills each role requires.

## The Elusive "One Thing"

It’s bold to characterize anything as *the* explanation or solution, so it’s a risky move to make such definitive assertions as “this is the one thing all great managers do.” But with enough research and focus, it is possible to identify that elusive “one thing.”

I like to think of the concept of “one thing” as a “controlling insight.” Controlling insights don’t explain all outcomes or events; they serve as the best explanation of the greatest number of events. Such insights help you know which of your actions will have the most far-reaching influence in virtually every situation.



more on the memories of his working-class upbringing to define his company's strategy than on the results of customer surveys or focus groups? Manjit works the night shift, and one of her hobbies is weight lifting. Are those factors relevant to her performance? What were these special people doing that made them so very good at their roles?

Once these many details were duly noted and recorded, they slowly came together to reveal the "one thing" at the core of great managing, great leading, and sustained individual success.

For a concept to emerge as the single controlling insight, it must pass three tests. First, it must be applicable across a wide range of situations. Take leadership as an example. Lately, much has been made of the notion that there is no one best way to lead and that instead, the most effective leadership style depends on the circumstance. While there is no doubt that different situations require different actions from a leader, that doesn't mean the most insightful thing you can say about leadership is that it's situational. With enough focus, you can identify the one thing that underpins successful leadership across all situations and all styles.

Second, a controlling insight must serve as a multiplier. In any equation, some factors will have only an additive value: When you focus your actions on these factors, you see some incremental improvement. The controlling insight should be more powerful. It should show you how to get exponential improvement. For example, good managing is the result of a combination of many actions—selecting talented employees, setting clear expectations, catching people doing things right, and so on—but none of these factors qualifies as the "one thing" that great managers do, because even when done well, these actions merely prevent managers from chasing their best employees away.

Finally, the controlling insight must guide action. It must point to precise things that can be done to create better outcomes more consistently. Insights that managers can act on—rather than simply ruminate over—are the ones that can make all the difference.

## The Game of Chess

What does the chess game look like in action? When I visited Michelle Miller, the manager who opened Walgreens' 4,000th store, I found the wall of her back office papered with work schedules. Michelle's store in Redondo Beach, California, employs people with sharply different skills and potentially disruptive differences in personality. A critical part of her job, therefore, is to put people into roles and shifts that will allow them to shine—and to avoid putting clashing personalities together. At the same time, she needs to find ways for individuals to grow.

There's Jeffrey, for example, a "goth rocker" whose hair is shaved on one side and long enough on the other side to cover his face. Michelle almost didn't hire him because he couldn't quite look her in the eye during his interview, but he wanted the hard-to-cover night shift, so she decided to give him a chance. After a couple of months, she noticed that when she gave Jeffrey a vague assignment, such as "Straighten up the merchandise in every aisle," what should have been a two-hour job would take him all night—and wouldn't be done very well. But if she gave him a more specific task, such as "Put up all the risers for Christmas," all the risers would be symmetrical, with the right merchandise on each one, perfectly priced, labeled, and "faced" (turned toward the customer). Give Jeffrey a generic task, and he would struggle. Give him one that forced him to be accurate and analytical, and he would excel. This, Michelle concluded, was Jeffrey's forte. So, as any good manager would do, she told him what she had deduced about him and praised him for his good work.

And a good manager would have left it at that. But Michelle knew she could get more out of Jeffrey. So she devised a scheme to reassign responsibilities across the entire store to capitalize on his unique strengths. In every Walgreens, there is a responsibility called "resets and revisions." A reset involves stocking an aisle with new merchandise, a task that usually coincides with a predictable change in customer buying patterns (at the end of summer, for example, the stores will replace sun creams and lip balms with allergy medicines). A revision is a less time-consuming but more frequent version of the same thing: Replace these cartons of toothpaste with this new and improved variety. Display this new line of detergent at this end of the row. Each aisle requires some form of revision at least once a week.

In most Walgreens stores, each employee "owns" one aisle, where she is responsible not only for serving customers but also for facing the merchandise, keeping the aisle clean and orderly, tagging items with a Telxon gun, and conducting all resets and revisions. This arrangement is simple and efficient, and it affords each employee a sense of personal responsibility. But Michelle decided that since Jeffrey was so good at resets and revisions—and didn't enjoy interacting with customers—this should be his full-time job, in every single aisle.

It was a challenge. One week's worth of revisions requires a binder three inches thick. But Michelle reasoned that not only would Jeffrey be excited by the challenge and get better and better with practice, but other employees would be freed from what they considered a chore and have more time to greet and serve customers. The store's performance proved her right. After the reorganization, Michelle saw not only increases in sales and profit but also in that most critical performance metric, customer satisfaction. In the subsequent four months, her store netted perfect scores in Walgreens' mystery shopper program.

So far, so very good. Sadly, it didn't last. This "perfect" arrangement depended on Jeffrey remaining content, and he didn't. With his success at doing resets and revisions, his confidence grew, and six months into the job, he wanted to move into management. Michelle wasn't disappointed by this, however; she was intrigued. She had watched Jeffrey's progress closely and had already decided that he might do well as a manager, though he wouldn't be a particularly emotive one. Besides, like any good chess player, she had been thinking a couple of moves ahead.

Over in the cosmetics aisle worked an employee named Genoa. Michelle saw Genoa as something of a double threat. Not only was she adept at putting customers at ease—she remembered their names, asked good questions, was welcoming yet professional when answering the phone—but she was also a neatnik. The cosmetics department was always perfectly faced, every product remained aligned, and everything was arranged just so. Her aisle was sexy: It made you want to reach out and touch the merchandise.

To capitalize on these twin talents, and to accommodate Jeffrey's desire for promotion, Michelle shuffled the roles within the store once again. She split Jeffrey's reset and revision job in two and gave the "revision" part of it to Genoa so that the whole store could now benefit from her ability to arrange merchandise attractively. But Michelle didn't want the store to miss out on Genoa's gift for customer service, so Michelle asked her to focus on the revision role only between 8:30 am and 11:30 am, and after that, when the store began to fill with customers on their lunch breaks, Genoa should shift her focus over to them.

She kept the reset role with Jeffrey. Assistant managers don't usually have an ongoing responsibility in the store, but, Michelle reasoned, he was now so good and so fast at tearing an aisle apart and rebuilding it that he could easily finish a major reset during a five-hour stint, so he could handle resets along with his managerial responsibilities.

By the time you read this, the Jeffrey-Genoa configuration has probably outlived its usefulness, and Michelle has moved on to design other effective and inventive configurations. The ability to keep tweaking roles to capitalize on the uniqueness of each person is the essence of great management.

A manager's approach to capitalizing on differences can vary tremendously from place to place. Walk into the back office at another Walgreens, this one in San Jose, California, managed by Jim Kawashima, and you won't see a single work schedule. Instead, the walls are covered with sales figures and statistics, the best of them circled with red felt-tip pen, and dozens of photographs of sales contest winners, most featuring a customer service representative named Manjit.

Manjit outperforms her peers consistently. When I first heard about her, she had just won a competition in Walgreens' suggestive selling program to sell the most units of Gillette deodorant in a month. The national average was 300; Manjit had sold 1,600. Disposable cameras, toothpaste, batteries—you name it, she could sell it. And Manjit won contest after contest despite working the graveyard shift, from 12:30 am to 8:30 am, during which she met significantly fewer customers than did her peers.

Manjit hadn't always been such an exceptional performer. She became stunningly successful only when Jim, who has made a habit of resuscitating troubled stores, came on board. What did Jim do to initiate the change in Manjit? He quickly picked up on her idiosyncrasies and figured out how to translate them into outstanding performance. For example, back in India, Manjit was an athlete—a runner and a weight lifter—and had always thrilled to the challenge of measured performance. When I interviewed her, one of the first things out of her mouth was, "On Saturday, I sold 343 low-carb candy bars. On Sunday, I sold 367. Yesterday, 110, and today, 105." I asked if she always knows how well she's doing. "Oh yes," she replied. "Every day I check Mr. K's charts. Even on my day off, I make a point to come in and check my numbers."

Manjit loves to win and revels in public recognition. Hence, Jim's walls are covered with charts and figures, Manjit's scores are always highlighted in red, and there are photos documenting her success. Another manager might have asked Manjit to curb her enthusiasm for the limelight and give someone else a chance. Jim found a way to capitalize on it.

But what about Jim's other staff members? Instead of being resentful of Manjit's public recognition, the other employees came to understand that Jim took the time to see them as individuals and evaluate them based on their personal strengths. They also knew that Manjit's success spoke well of the entire store, so her success galvanized the team. In fact, before long, the pictures of Manjit began to include other employees from the store, too. After a few months, the San Jose location was ranked number one out of 4,000 in Walgreens' suggestive selling program.

## **Great Managers Are Romantics**

Think back to Michelle. Her creative choreography may sound like a last resort, an attempt to make the best of a bad hire. It's not. Jeffrey and Genoa are not mediocre employees, and capitalizing on each person's uniqueness is a tremendously powerful tool.

First, identifying and capitalizing on each person's uniqueness saves time. No employee, however talented, is perfectly well-rounded. Michelle could have spent untold hours coaching Jeffrey and cajoling him into smiling at, making friends with, and remembering the names of customers, but she probably would have seen little result for her efforts. Her time was much better spent carving out a role that took advantage of Jeffrey's natural abilities.

Second, capitalizing on uniqueness makes each person more accountable. Michelle didn't just praise Jeffrey for his ability to execute specific assignments. She challenged him to make this ability the cornerstone of his contribution to the store, to take ownership for this ability, to practice it, and to refine it.

Third, capitalizing on what is unique about each person builds a stronger sense of team, because it creates interdependency. It helps people appreciate one another's particular skills and learn that their coworkers can fill in where they are lacking. In short, it makes people need one another. The old cliché is that there's no "I" in "team." But as Michael Jordan once said, "There may be no 'I' in 'team,' but there is in 'win.'"

Finally, when you capitalize on what is unique about each person, you introduce a healthy degree of disruption into your world. You shuffle existing hierarchies: If Jeffrey is in charge of all resets and revisions in the store, should he now command more or less respect than an assistant manager? You also shuffle existing assumptions about who is allowed to do what: If Jeffrey devises new methods of resetting an aisle, does he have to ask permission to try these out, or can he experiment on his own? And you shuffle existing beliefs about where the true expertise lies: If Genoa comes up with a way of arranging new merchandise that she thinks is more appealing than the method suggested by the "planogram" sent down from Walgreens headquarters, does her expertise trump the planners back at corporate? These questions will challenge Walgreens' orthodoxies and thus will help the company become more inquisitive, more intelligent, more vital, and, despite its size, more able to duck and weave into the future.

All that said, the reason great managers focus on uniqueness isn't just because it makes good business sense. They do it because they can't help it. Like Shelley and Keats, the nineteenth-century Romantic poets, great managers are fascinated with individuality for its own sake. Fine shadings of personality, though they may be invisible to some and frustrating to others, are crystal clear to and highly valued by great managers. They could no more ignore these subtleties than ignore their own needs and desires. Figuring out what makes people tick is simply in their nature.

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## **The Three Levers**

Although the Romantics were mesmerized by differences, at some point, managers need to rein in their inquisitiveness, gather up what they know about a person, and put the employee's idiosyncrasies to use. To that end, there are three things you must know about someone to manage her well: her strengths, the triggers that activate those strengths, and how she learns.

## What You Need to Know About Each of Your Direct Reports

- What are his or her strengths?
- What are the triggers that activate those strengths?
- What is his or her learning style?

### What You Need to Know About Each of Your Direct Reports

#### **Make the most of strengths.**

It takes time and effort to gain a full appreciation of an employee's strengths and weaknesses. The great manager spends a good deal of time outside the office walking around, watching each person's reactions to events, listening, and taking mental notes about what each individual is drawn to and what each person struggles with. There's no substitute for this kind of observation, but you can obtain a lot of information about a person by asking a few simple, open-ended questions and listening carefully to the answers. Two queries in particular have proven most revealing when it comes to identifying strengths and weaknesses, and I recommend asking them of all new hires—and revisiting the questions periodically.

To identify a person's strengths, first ask, "What was the best day at work you've had in the past three months?" Find out what the person was doing and why he enjoyed it so much. Remember: A strength is not merely something you are good at. In fact, it might be something you aren't good at yet. It might be just a predilection, something you find so intrinsically satisfying that you look forward to doing it again and again and getting better at it over time. This question will prompt your employee to start thinking about his interests and abilities from this perspective.

To identify a person's weaknesses, just invert the question: "What was the worst day you've had at work in the past three months?" And then probe for details about what he was doing and why it grated on him so much. As with a strength, a weakness is not merely something you are bad at (in fact, you might be quite competent at it). It is something that drains you of energy, an activity that you never look forward to doing and that when you are doing it, all you can think about is stopping.

Although you're keeping an eye out for both the strengths and weaknesses of your employees, your focus should be on their strengths. Conventional wisdom holds that self-awareness is a good thing and that it's the job of the manager to identify weaknesses and create a plan for overcoming them. But research by Albert Bandura, the father of social learning theory, has shown that self-assurance (labeled "self-efficacy" by cognitive psychologists), not self-awareness, is the strongest predictor of a person's ability to set high goals, to persist in the face of obstacles, to bounce back when reversals occur, and, ultimately, to achieve the goals they set. By contrast, self-awareness has not been shown to be a predictor of any of these outcomes, and in some cases, it appears to retard them.

Great managers seem to understand this instinctively. They know that their job is not to arm each employee with a dispassionately accurate understanding of the limits of her strengths and the liabilities of her weaknesses but to reinforce her self-assurance. That's why great managers focus on strengths. When a person succeeds, the great manager doesn't praise her hard work. Even if there's some exaggeration in the statement, he tells her that she succeeded because she has become so good at deploying her specific strengths. This, the manager knows, will strengthen the employee's self-assurance and make her more optimistic and more resilient in the face of challenges to come.

The focus-on-strengths approach might create in the employee a modicum of overconfidence, but great managers mitigate this by emphasizing the size and the difficulty of the employee's goals. They know that their primary objective is to create in each employee a specific state of mind: one that includes a realistic assessment of the difficulty of the obstacle ahead but an unrealistically optimistic belief in her ability to overcome it.

And what if the employee fails? Assuming the failure is not attributable to factors beyond her control, always explain failure as a lack of effort, even if this is only partially accurate. This will obscure self-doubt and give her something to work on as she faces up to the next challenge.

Repeated failure, of course, may indicate weakness where a role requires strength. In such cases, there are four approaches for overcoming weaknesses. If the problem amounts to a lack of skill or knowledge, that's easy to solve: Simply offer the relevant training, allow some time for the employee to incorporate the new skills, and look for signs of improvement. If her performance doesn't get better, you'll know that the reason she's struggling is because she is missing certain talents, a deficit no amount of skill or knowledge training is likely to fix. You'll have to find a way to manage around this weakness and neutralize it.

Which brings us to the second strategy for overcoming an employee weakness. Can you find her a partner, someone whose talents are strong in precisely the areas where hers are weak? Here's how this strategy can look in action. As vice president of merchandising for the women's clothing retailer Ann Taylor, Judi Langley found that tensions were rising between her and one of her merchandising managers, Claudia (not her real name), whose analytical mind and intense nature created an overpowering "need to know." If Claudia learned of something before Judi had a chance to review it with her, she would become deeply frustrated. Given the speed with which decisions were made, and given Judi's busy schedule, this happened frequently. Judi was concerned that Claudia's irritation was unsettling the whole product team, not to mention earning the employee a reputation as a malcontent.

An average manager might have identified this behavior as a weakness and lectured Claudia on how to control her need for information. Judi, however, realized that this "weakness" was an aspect of Claudia's greatest strength: her analytical mind. Claudia would never be able to rein it in, at least not for long. So Judi looked for a strategy that would honor and support Claudia's need to know, while channeling it more productively. Judi decided to act as Claudia's information partner, and she committed to leaving Claudia a voice mail at the end of each day with a brief update. To make sure nothing fell through the cracks, they set up two live "touch base" conversations per week. This solution managed Claudia's expectations and assured her that she would get the information she needed, if not exactly when she wanted it, then at least at frequent and predictable intervals. Giving Claudia a partner neutralized the negative manifestations of her strength, allowing her to focus her analytical mind on her work. (Of course, in most cases, the partner would need to be someone other than a manager.)

Should the perfect partner prove hard to find, try this third strategy: Insert into the employee's world a technique that helps accomplish through discipline what the person can't accomplish through instinct. I met one very successful screenwriter and director who had struggled with telling other professionals, such as composers and directors of photography, that their work was not up to snuff. So he devised a mental trick: He now imagines what the "god of art" would want and uses this imaginary entity as a source of strength. In his mind, he no longer imposes his own opinion on his colleagues but rather tells himself (and them) that an authoritative third party has weighed in.

If training produces no improvement, if complementary partnering proves impractical, and if no nifty discipline technique can be found, you are going to have to try the fourth and final strategy, which is to rearrange the employee's working world to render his weakness irrelevant, as Michelle Miller did with Jeffrey. This strategy will require of you, first, the creativity to envision a more effective arrangement and, second, the courage to make that arrangement work. But as Michelle's experience revealed, the payoff that may come in the form of increased employee productivity and engagement is well worth it.

### **Trigger good performance.**

A person's strengths aren't always on display. Sometimes they require precise triggering to turn them on. Squeeze the right trigger, and a person will push himself harder and persevere in the face of resistance. Squeeze the wrong one, and the person may well shut down. This can be tricky because triggers come in myriad and mysterious forms. One employee's trigger might be tied to the time of day (he is a night owl, and

his strengths only kick in after 3 pm). Another employee's trigger might be tied to time with you, the boss (even though he's worked with you for more than five years, he still needs you to check in with him every day, or he feels he's being ignored). Another worker's trigger might be just the opposite—independence (she's only worked for you for six months, but if you check in with her even once a week, she feels micromanaged).

The most powerful trigger by far is recognition, not money. If you're not convinced of this, start ignoring one of your highly paid stars, and watch what happens. Most managers are aware that employees respond well to recognition. Great managers refine and extend this insight. They realize that each employee plays to a slightly different audience. To excel as a manager, you must be able to match the employee to the audience he values most. One employee's audience might be his peers; the best way to praise him would be to stand him up in front of his coworkers and publicly celebrate his achievement. Another's favorite audience might be you; the most powerful recognition would be a one-on-one conversation where you tell him quietly but vividly why he is such a valuable member of the team. Still another employee might define himself by his expertise; his most prized form of recognition would be some type of professional or technical award. Yet another might value feedback only from customers, in which case a picture of the employee with her best customer or a letter to her from the customer would be the best form of recognition.

Given how much personal attention it requires, tailoring praise to fit the person is mostly a manager's responsibility. But organizations can take a cue from this, too. There's no reason why a large company can't take this individualized approach to recognition and apply it to every employee. Of all the companies I've encountered, the North American division of HSBC, a London-based bank, has done the best job of this. Each year it presents its top individual consumer-lending performers with its Dream Awards. Each winner receives a unique prize. During the year, managers ask employees to identify what they would like to receive should they win. The prize value is capped at \$10,000, and it cannot be redeemed as cash, but beyond those two restrictions, each employee is free to pick the prize he wants. At the end of the year, the company holds a Dream Awards gala, during which it shows a video about the winning employee and why he selected his particular prize.

You can imagine the impact these personalized prizes have on HSBC employees. It's one thing to be brought up on stage and given yet another plaque. It's another thing when, in addition to public recognition of your performance, you receive a college tuition fund for your child, or the Harley-Davidson motorcycle you've always dreamed of, or—the prize everyone at the company still talks about—the airline tickets to fly you and your family back to Mexico to visit the grandmother you haven't seen in ten years.

### **Tailor to learning styles.**

Although there are many learning styles, a careful review of adult learning theory reveals that three styles predominate. These three are not mutually exclusive; certain employees may rely on a combination of two or perhaps all three. Nonetheless, staying attuned to each employee's style or styles will help focus your coaching.

First, there's analyzing. Claudia from Ann Taylor is an analyzer. She understands a task by taking it apart, examining its elements, and reconstructing it piece by piece. Because every single component of a task is important in her eyes, she craves information. She needs to absorb all there is to know about a subject before she can begin to feel comfortable with it. If she doesn't feel she has enough information, she will dig and push until she gets it. She will read the assigned reading. She will attend the required classes. She will take good notes. She will study. And she will still want more.

The best way to teach an analyzer is to give her ample time in the classroom. Role-play with her. Do postmortem exercises with her. Break her performance down into its component parts so she can carefully build it back up. Always allow her time to prepare. The analyzer hates mistakes. A commonly held view is that mistakes fuel learning, but for the analyzer, this just isn't true. In fact, the reason she prepares so diligently is to minimize the possibility of mistakes. So don't expect to teach her much by throwing her into a new situation and telling her to wing it.

The opposite is true for the second dominant learning style, doing. While the most powerful learning moments for the analyzer occur prior to the performance, the doer's most powerful moments occur *during* the performance. Trial and error are integral to this learning process. Jeffrey, from Michelle Miller's store, is a doer. He learns the most while he's in the act of figuring things out for himself. For him, preparation is a dry, uninspiring activity. So rather than role-play with someone like Jeffrey, pick a specific task within his role that is simple but real, give him a brief overview of the outcomes you want, and get out of his way. Then gradually increase the degree of each task's complexity until he has mastered every aspect of his role. He may make a few mistakes along the way, but for the doer, mistakes are the raw material for learning.

Finally, there's watching. Watchers won't learn much through role-playing. They won't learn by doing, either. Since most formal training programs incorporate both of these elements, watchers are often viewed as rather poor students. That may be true, but they aren't necessarily poor learners.

Watchers can learn a great deal when they are given the chance to see the total performance. Studying the individual parts of a task is about as meaningful for them as studying the individual pixels of a digital photograph. What's important for this type of learner is the content of each pixel, its position relative to all the others. Watchers are only able to see this when they view the complete picture.

As it happens, this is the way I learn. Years ago, when I first began interviewing, I struggled to learn the skill of creating a report on a person after I had interviewed him. I understood all the required steps, but I couldn't seem to put them together. Some of my colleagues could knock out a report in an hour; for me, it would take the better part of a day. Then one afternoon, as I was staring morosely into my Dictaphone, I overheard the voice of the analyst next door. He was talking so rapidly that I initially thought he was on the phone. Only after a few minutes did I realize that he was dictating a report. This was the first time I had heard someone "in the act." I'd seen the finished results countless times, since reading the reports of others was the way we were supposed to learn, but I'd never actually heard another analyst in the act of creation. It was a revelation. I finally saw how everything should come together into a coherent whole. I remember picking up my Dictaphone, mimicking the cadence and even the accent of my neighbor, and feeling the words begin to flow.

If you're trying to teach a watcher, by far the most effective technique is to get her out of the classroom. Take her away from the manuals, and make her ride shotgun with one of your most experienced performers. • • •

We've seen, in the stories of great managers like Michelle Miller and Judi Langley, that at the very heart of their success lies an appreciation for individuality. This is not to say that managers don't need other skills. They need to be able to hire well, to set expectations, and to interact productively with their own bosses, just to name a few. But what they do—instinctively—is play chess. Mediocre managers assume (or hope) that their employees will all be motivated by the same things and driven by the same goals, that they will desire the same kinds of relationships and learn in roughly the same way. They define the behaviors they expect from people and tell them to work on behaviors that don't come naturally. They praise those who can overcome their natural styles to conform to preset ideas. In short, they believe the manager's job is to mold, or transform, each employee into the perfect version of the role.

Great managers don't try to change a person's style. They never try to push a knight to move in the same way as a bishop. They know that their employees will differ in how they think, how they build relationships, how altruistic they are, how patient they can be, how much of an expert they need to be, how prepared they need to feel, what drives them, what challenges them, and what their goals are. These differences of trait and talent are like blood types: They cut across the superficial variations of race, sex, and age and capture the essential uniqueness of each individual.

Differences of trait and talent are like blood types: They cut across the superficial variations of race, sex, and age and capture each person's uniqueness.

Like blood types, the majority of these differences are enduring and resistant to change. A manager's most precious resource is time, and great managers know that the most effective way to invest their time is to identify exactly how each employee is different and then to figure out how

best to incorporate those enduring idiosyncrasies into the overall plan.

To excel at managing others, you must bring that insight to your actions and interactions. Always remember that great managing is about release, not transformation. It's about constantly tweaking your environment so that the unique contribution, the unique needs, and the unique style of each employee can be given free rein. Your success as a manager will depend almost entirely on your ability to do this.

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**lazar pilli** a month ago

Excellent article

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