

You asked. Our panelists answered.

February 3, 2021



Dr. Hartman

Q: Dr. Hartman, what do you recommend a leader do when he/she is fired up for bold/fearless change, but the community is committed to the status quo?

A: Find another job before it's too late.

Q: Do you agree/disagree that the results of this pandemic has catapulted the value notion of online versus face-to-face education with the almost one year of online education?

A: Yes, with some persons and at some institutions. Unfortunately, the quality of these "pandemic online courses" is questionable. In many cases, these "online courses" look more like correspondence courses, with very little faculty-to-student engagement

Q: Do you see online courses taking on new meaning for institutions moving forward? From pandemic necessity to recognized flexibility and cost savings for students.

A: Yes, the Genie is out of the online bottle. Quality will be the key differentiator moving forward.

Q: Assuming that more students will want to continue online education, what considerations should colleges begin to explore regarding space utilization? Do you anticipate a demand for instruction that allows students the option to attend a classes either in-person, or online?"

A: Yes, new thinking about space utilization must be considered, including renting meeting rooms (by the hour or day) at locations within the community.

Dr. Johnson

Q: How do you balance credentials vs. degrees at your institution and where will the growth be in the next 10 years?

A: Striking a balance of credentials versus degrees requires the participation of many internal and external constituent groups including but not limited to academic review boards, strategic planning committees, the office of budget and planning, business & industry partners, workforce investment boards, practitioners-in-residence, career services professionals, regional accreditation bodies, existing articulation agreements (particularly for institutions belonging to systems), needs assessments, student interest, etc.

Growth industries of the next 10 years are: Information technology, healthcare, digital marketing, artificial intelligence, robotics, hospitality, education, construction trades, advanced manufacturing, and software engineering.

Q: Virtual classroom learning is reported to be less effective than the in-person experience, in terms of student learning, yet the virtual classroom affords significant cost savings. From this perspective, what are your expectations for post pandemic education delivery?

A: Post pandemic education will include a variety of takeaways learned during the pandemic. There will be a greater appreciation for asynchronous learning, and a ubiquitous approach to hybrid options. This will be universal throughout the preschool - PHD enterprise. When done correctly, planning for e-learning will take into account and rectify all of the pre-pandemic limitations that contributed to the digital divide. Thus, the expectation here is that there exists a post-pandemic opportunity to narrow, if not close, academic achievement gaps and enhance the mission of diversity, equity and inclusion through improved access to technology.

Q: How do we work across the world educational system to have an international system that works for students?

A: A starting point for greater collaboration across world education systems could begin with the implementation of best practices from existing programs sponsored by various governmental agencies such as the US Department of Education, USAID, Peace Corps, along with international organizations such as the United Nations. There are literally hundreds of not-for-profit organizations and NGOs committed to the effort of greater collaboration between and amongst world education systems. For an excellent program that inspires international you, please check out Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE.)

Q: Do you see colleges changing what types of credentials they are offering and adding more short term and micro-options for students? Why or why not?

A: In the near-and long-term, many colleges with workforce preparedness and/or community development embedded in their overarching mission or program specific missions will increase their short-term and micro-options. The needs and demands of students, forward-thinking academics, business and industry, and financial sponsors will dictate this.

Dr. Parker

Q: When we place senior administrators, how do we evaluate and try to understand if they can think out of the box, be dynamic, have a sense of what is coming next?

A: Strong leaders seeking senior administrators create job profiles that identify “opportunities/challenges” for the position and seek candidates understand how to respond to the profile within the cover letter and vitae relative to accomplishments. During the interview process, it is important to follow a similar trend in asking questions that require a candidate to provide examples of similar work, which allows you to better understand the skillset of the candidate and any innovations and accomplishments of their prior work. During the interview, the search committee should hear multiple examples within their prior work. Finally, some managers will want to understand the candidate’s strengths and EQ emotional intelligence through formal assessments to ensure the candidate has the strengths that are sought.

Q: How do you believe the habits that students have formed while being virtual (and at home) will impact the face-to-face classroom once returned?

A: The pandemic has been difficult for students but has provided some benefit. Students who are introverts prefer to work alone and have experienced some benefit of being able to work alone from home, during the pandemic. For these students, their preference is that their questions are responded to efficiently and effectively through electronic communications. On the other hand, students that are extraverts miss the interaction with people, and prefer more human interaction, quick responses, and instant feedback. They struggle learning from home as they desire human interaction, presents as a weakness when learning from home due to a potential lack of concentration, especially given the everyday household activities and interruptions that are going on around them. Generally speaking, first generation students initially struggle to understand how they learn, and as a result their study skills may not be efficient and requires interventions that may not be readily available given the pandemic. Given changing demographics, more of our students are parents and struggle trying to learn from home while their children are doing the same. They are experiencing issues of lack of broadband access and childcare that increases their stress and

anxiety. Many of our students are low income front line workers experiencing housing and food insecurities. Given these major challenges, I am hopeful that students have learned to be more resilient, by figuring out the best time in the day to learn and have created those opportunities. I believe it they take these steps in creating awareness of how and when they learn, their opportunity for success increases.

Q: Global forces impact local issues. So, for example the poverty and politics of faraway places have driven a refugee crisis etc. Any thoughts on how global events will impact community colleges as our classrooms become more diverse?

A: Global forces have already and will continue to impact the changing demographics of the United States and as a result there is a changing demographic with the community college. For example, in one of my campus communities 70% of kindergarteners are Somali. To best serve new immigrant and refugee students, community colleges should create programs that support English language learners and work with Adult Basic Education programs to prepare them for college level work. Community colleges should provide necessary wrap around services that supports student success. For example, at my college we have created quiet rooms that accommodate prayer or relaxation during the day. This space is sometimes used by Muslim students as a place to go between classes for prayer. Without such a place they may not be able to stay to take additional coursework. We also added foot washing stations to increase access and reduce maintenance of existing facilities. These examples provide this population evidence that we have care and concern for their success. We also provide admissions and recruitment events that provide materials and presentations in their native language, we invite extended families and provide meals from their culture, which builds trust in these communities. We demonstrate our commitment by having faculty and staff that are diverse and represent our student body. We provide wrap around services like mental health counselors, food and clothing closets, and in partnership with community non-profit organizations and immigration officials we provide community supports. Finally, through our workforce development department we offer language and culture classes to support employers so that understand how to hire and retain new immigrants and refugee students.

Q: How would you see your campus reimagined post COVID 19? Traditional classroom environments, lecture halls, etc.

A: I believe the amount of change will depend on the size and Carnegie classification of the institution. However, a common theme will be more online courses. I believe that High Flex courses will be the most widespread. High flex is described as courses that are face to face or online, allowing students to attend in the manner that best supports their individual preference.

High flex classrooms require additional technology that institutions are increasing and will be more common after the pandemic. It will take many months before we end social distancing in classrooms and High Flex allows the institution to offer classes at a traditional size while providing social distancing protocols. High flex is very practical and efficient for large lecture halls but is also effective for smaller classrooms at community colleges. Finally, I believe that public universities and colleges that have not traditionally offered a lot of online but have now invested in professional development and an online infrastructure will continue to strengthen their online capability in order to compete in the marketplace.

Dr. Teahen

Q: 2020 may well be a turning point for higher education that initiates a much-needed disruption. What would you say are the primary lessons learned that colleges should have from 2020?

A: Let me begin by emphasizing the questioner's point: that this may well be a turning point for higher education and a much-needed disruption. Faculty, staff, and leadership of institutions all learned from our shared experiences of the past year. Primary among them, in my view, are these: First, technology can be more effectively leveraged to produce high-quality educational programming; Second, programming does not always need to be synchronous (and in some cases, it may not need to be synchronous at all); Third, time is not the primary variable to consider with learning; and Finally, and importantly, our systems have not been designed to be sufficiently equitable. Taken further, success will have resulted from this experience if we capitalize on this learning and make education more robust, more equitable, and more flexible.

Q: Will most institutions make vaccinations mandatory?

A: While I do expect strong encouragement (and even incentives) for students and staff to get a vaccine to protect against the varied forms of Covid, I would not anticipate that many institutions would make this a condition of either employment or enrollment. There are just too many factors mitigating against, including individual freedom, to suggest this as a good course forward. That said, given the slow rollout of vaccines, it will likely be considerable time before our primary student populations (18-25-year-olds) will even have this opportunity.

Q: How do we update the requirements of regional accrediting bodies and state governments, who require more traditional education plans and programs, and help those agencies adjust to a new reality? A reality that will require community and technical colleges to be even more flexible, innovative, and nimble.

A: As a long-time peer reviewer in the Higher Learning Commission region, I appreciate the source

of this question since many interpret the standards in limiting ways. From my experience, there IS a willingness to consider alternative strategies that would encourage more innovation. Historically, many of these have been rolled out as pilots, including through external grant funding. So, the question is really one about how we can assure that all the agencies more vigorously embrace change, that peer reviewers who conduct site visits and review institutional arguments be more open to different models, and that the scale be expanded (so that any with good track records can access alternative approaches). The best way to effect this change is to make sure that the leadership of each agency knows of our interest in enabling our institutions to be “more flexible, innovative, and nimble.” Remember that these are membership organizations who exist to serve us. I believe they will be open and welcome constructive suggestions. One possible approach to implementation is to enable colleges to propose how they will meet the core standards in ways that may not be typical. (It will also be helpful if there are fewer, more global core standards.)

Q: We are beginning a strategic technology plan to best position our community college for teaching and supporting students “after” pandemic. Other than asynchronous online learning, our technology has been primarily used to supplement F2F instruction. We think we need to pivot to a new technology routine for connecting and serving our students on the grand scale. What strategies and recommendations for resources do you suggest for such a major pivot in teaching and learning?

A: Quality technology expertise in the organization is vital. Institutions need to be prepared to pay these individuals what they deserve, and I have seen that as a problem in some institutions, that results in considerable turnover and less-than-optimal solutions. At the same time, many institutions are spending MUCH on the hardware and software but not realizing the results desired. So, my first advice is to have the right expertise (or as Collins would say, “the right people in the right seat on the bus”). This expertise extends to including individuals to lead the technology-intensive teaching/learning processes and not just the typical IT professionals. Finally, immense continuing professional development is indicated to enable those who are teaching virtually to utilize the best tools and strategies for the content. Smaller organizations likely need to rely on external consultation and/or collaborative relationships with other organizations. Integral to empowering the talent to get the tasks done with excellence is the need for understanding what those faculty and staff want to achieve. This is an iterative, collaborative, and long-term process. Obviously, our resources are limited, so reallocation of precious organization assets will be necessary if we are to put the right people in place.

All Panelists

Q: A question for all the panelists: Just today two world leaders, President Macron and Chancellor Angela Merkel, noted that for the European Union “a crisis for one is a threat for all”: it strikes me as also very applicable to Higher Education, but rarely practiced: do you feel universities should more actively reach out to each other as we move forward from the pandemic?

Dr. Hartman

A: Should they? Yes. Will they? Don't count on it.

We can't even get most public colleges in their own State to collaborate for the better of the collective. My hunch is that external pressures (i.e. state and national lawmakers, unsustainable debt, hyperinflation, consumer demand, etc.) will force US institutions to seek alternatives for delivering their educational programs. If you have not done your homework in the World Bank and IMF “Great Reset” proposals, you are going to be way behind the curve when it happens in 2021 or 2022.

Dr. Johnson

A: Yes, of course. There are scores of international higher education collaborations that exist involving university to university, government to university, government to government etc. There are numerous examples within USAID, the State Department, Health and Human Services, as well as various federal agencies and programs such as Peace Corps which combine education and service. Please be encouraged to follow and participate in the development and rollout of the various Covid-19 vaccines conducted by research universities coordinating and cooperating across borders at unprecedented levels to equitably suffocate the worldwide spread.

Dr. Parker

A: Yes, I believe the pandemic and racial reckoning has accelerated collaborations through civic organizations that promote democracy and racial healing. During the Trump administration institutions of all types rallied and created organizations in support of international students and DACA students, which I suspect will continue. The crisis has also negatively impacted enrollment and/or budget challenges regardless of institution type, as a result 4-year institutions are expanding 2-year transfer or articulations.

Dr. Teahen

A: I agree that a threat to one is a threat to all – and by extension, the future of higher education globally WILL impact institutions in America. Many higher education trends – like quality emphases or performance funding – are not isolated to one nation or region. There is a lot of collaboration among colleges and universities one-by-one, faculty-to-faculty; staff-to-staff; or department-to-department. However, our institutions will be better served if they expand their external partnerships and learn from others' experiences more broadly, as institutions. Organizational learning requires acquiring, sharing, and using knowledge. A major source of acquiring it is from the experience of other colleges and industries that have confronted comparable challenges. Many refer to the silos in higher education, and their preponderance is detrimental to our ability to also be learning organizations – and thus more creative/innovative/entrepreneurial. In addition to looking to higher education in other countries, we also need to look to other industries to learn how they have adapted to changed circumstances. Not all results have been positive (e.g., banking, health care, etc.) but we have the benefit of time to improve on earlier solutions.